DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 475 909 UD 035 636

AUTHOR	Mediratta, Kavitha; Fruchter, Norm; Lewis, Anne C.
TITLE	Organizing for School Reform: How Communities Are Finding Their Voices and Reclaiming Their Public Schools.
INSTITUTION	New York Univ., NY. Inst. for Education and Social Policy.
SPONS AGENCY	Edward W. Hazen Foundation, Inc., New Haven, CT.; Ford Foundation, New York, NY.; New World Foundation, New York, NY.; Rockefeller Bros. Fund, New York, NY.; Surdna Foundation, Inc., New York, NY.
PUB DATE	2002-10-00
NOTE	53p.; Additional support from Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program, Tides Foundation Valentine Fund, and Wendling Foundation.
AVAILABLE FROM	Institute for Education and Social Policy, 726 Broadway, Fifth Floor, New York, NY 10003. Tel: 212-998-5880; Fax: 212-995-4564; Web site: http://www.nyu.edu/iesp.
PUB TYPE	Numerical/Quantitative Data (110) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC03 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Community Involvement; *Community Organizations; *Educational Improvement; Elementary Secondary Education; Low Achievement; *Low Income Groups; Parent Participation; Politics of Education; Public Schools; School Community Relationship; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS	California (Los Angeles); California (San Francisco); District of Columbia; Illinois (Chicago); Maryland (Baltimore); Mississippi Delta; New York (New York); Pennsylvania (Philadelphia); *Reform Strategies

ABSTRACT

This report examines the work of 66 community groups organizing to improve public education in low-performing schools and districts. These largely local, community-based organizations focus on engaging public school parents, low-income families, and students in school improvement efforts. Their goals are to build political power and to challenge school systems that serve children poorly. This report describes the diversity of methods and approaches groups are using and reports groups' organizing achievements and challenges. Results find that school reform organizing plays a significant role in creating the political context in which change can happen. Organizing groups focus schools on critical issues, identify and build support for key interventions, and establish a stronger sense of accountability between schools and communities. They are increasing the ability of young people, parents, and community residents to participate in local reform efforts, and they are helping members to raise essential school performance questions forcefully and persistently. The report discusses implications for educators and offers recommendations for funders (e.g., the need to develop greater capacity in the organizing groups, create and strengthen intermediary or "support" organizations that provide technical help such as data analysis, and develop better ways to measure the impact of organizing). An appendix describes the methodology used and includes contact information for the organizations profiled in the study. (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

ED 475 909

Organizing for School Reform

HOW COMMUNITIES ARE FINDING THEIR VOICE AND RECLAIMING THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

C. Ascher
IESP, New York University

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY
STEINHARDT SCHOOL OF EDUCATION, NEW YORK UNIVERSITY
with CALIFORNIA TOMORROW, DESIGNS FOR CHANGE *and* SOUTHERN ECHO

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

OCTOBER 2002

2

UD 035 636

About the Institute for Education and Social Policy

The New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy (IESP) was formed in 1995 to improve public education so that all students, particularly in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color, obtain a just and equitable education, and can participate effectively in a democratic society. Our research, policy studies, evaluations and strategic assistance informs policy makers, educators, parents, youth, and community groups in their efforts to improve public schooling. For more information, visit our website at *www.nyu.edu/iesp*.

About the Community Involvement Program

"Organizing for School Reform" was produced by IESP's Community Involvement Program (CIP) under the leadership of Kavitha Mediratta and Barbara Gross. CIP was initiated in 1996 to support community organizing for school reform. CIP provides strategic support and assistance to community groups that organize parents to improve their schools, as well as to groups collaborating to shape more effective and equitable education policies in New York City.

COPYRIGHT © 2002
THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY

You may copy or distribute this report for personal or noncommercial use, as long as all copies include the title page and this copyright page. The report may not be modified or displayed on other websites or intranets without the written permission of the Institute for Education and Social Policy. You may not copy or distribute this report for commercial use without first obtaining written permission from IESP.

This report is available from:
INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY
726 BROADWAY, 5TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10003
TEL (212) 998-5880
FAX (212) 995-4564
www.nyu.edu/iesp

COVER PHOTO
Northern Liberty Community and Clergy Coalition rally on school construction

COVER PHOTO BY
Eric Smith

DESIGN
POLLEN, New York

Organizing for School Reform

HOW COMMUNITIES ARE FINDING THEIR VOICES AND RECLAIMING THEIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Kavitha Mediratta

Norm Fruchter

and Anne C. Lewis

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY
STEINHARDT SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

OCTOBER 2002

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Contents

List of Illustrations iv

Acknowledgments v

Summary vii

INTRODUCTION 1

KEY FINDINGS 3

1. The field of community organizing for school reform is new and expanding rapidly 3

2. Organizing is improving schools and building stronger communities 6

3. How the work looks depends on the context and constituency 8

4. Adult and youth organizing groups tend to work separately, but interest in intergenerational organizing is growing 10

5. Organizing is becoming more sophisticated 10

6. Groups are addressing the challenges of access, legitimacy, and accountability 14

7. The work needs support to scale up 18

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS 19

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUNDERS 21

PROFILES 25

Asian and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health 25

Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County 26

Logan Square Neighborhood Association 27

New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee 29

New York City ACORN 30

Oakland Community Organizations 31

South Central Youth Empowered through Action 32

Washington Interfaith Network 34

Youth United for Change 35

APPENDICES 36

Methodology 36

Contact Information for Organizations in the Study 37

Advisory Group 39

Related Publications 40

6

List of Illustrations

FIGURE 1 School Reform Organizing in the United States 4

FIGURE 2 Groups Entering the Field of School Reform 5

FIGURE 3 Race and Ethnicity of Group Memberships 6

FIGURE 4 What Kinds of Groups Do This Work? 8

FIGURE 5 National Affiliations 9

FIGURE 6 Youth, Adult, and Intergenerational Organizing Groups by Research Site 10

FIGURE 7 Education Organizing Experience 11

FIGURE 8 What are Groups Winning? 12

FIGURE 9 Central Issues of Educators Versus Community Organizing Groups 13

FIGURE 10 1999–2000 Reading Test Results for District 9 14

FIGURE 11 Most of the Children Can't Read 15

FIGURE 12 City, State, and Regional Coalitions for Policy Change 16

FIGURE 13 Annual Budgets of Organizing Groups 17

Acknowledgments

THIS REPORT summarizes a longer document, *Mapping the Field of Organizing for School Reform*, which was written by Kavitha Mediratta and Norm Fruchter with the assistance of Barbara Gross, Anne Henderson, Christine Donis Keller, and Sherry Giles of the Institute for Education and Social Policy. Ruben Lizardo of California Tomorrow in Oakland, Suzanne Davenport of Designs for Change in Chicago, and Nsombi Lambright of Southern Echo in Mississippi also provided invaluable conceptual assistance.

Barbara Gross directed the data collection phases of this study, supervising the identification of groups and the survey and interview development and implementation efforts. She was ably assisted by Sherry Giles. This report is based on data gathered and analyzed by the following:

BALTIMORE: Richard Gray Jr. and Laura Wheeldreyer
CHICAGO: Suzanne Davenport of Designs for Change
CALIFORNIA: Mamie Chow, Laurie Olsen, Ruben Lizardo, and Carol Dowell of California Tomorrow
MISSISSIPPI DELTA: Nsombi Lambright of Southern Echo
NEW YORK CITY: Barbara Gross, Norm Fruchter, shola olatoye, Sherry Giles, Mili Bonilla, Kavitha Mediratta, and Juan Echazarreta
PHILADELPHIA: Barbara Gross, Mili Bonilla, and Kavitha Mediratta
WASHINGTON, DC: Anne Henderson

We wish to thank the staff of the almost 70 organizing groups who participated in this study. We also appreciate the thoughtful comments of our national advisory group members (see page 42), who assisted us in developing a definition of community organizing to guide this research and also helped us identify organizing groups at each site.

We're grateful to the Edward W. Hazen Foundation, the Ford Foundation, the New World Foundation, the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, the Surdna Foundation, the Tides Foundation, the Unitarian Universalist Veatch Program, and the Wendling Foundation for funding this study. Special thanks to Barbara Taveras and Lori Bezahler of the Hazen Foundation, for their guidance and support.

IESP's funders and supporters include:

Carnegie Corporation
Annie E. Casey Foundation
Edna McConnell Clark Foundation
Robert Sterling Clark Foundation
Community Impact Fund
Cornerstone
Donors Education Collaborative
Drum Major Institute for Public Policy
Edward W. Hazen Foundation
Charles S. Mott Foundation
National Education Association
New York City Board of Education
New York Community Trust
New York State Education Department
New Visions for Public Schools
New World Foundation
Open Society Institute
Plainfield, New Jersey, Board of Education
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
Rockefeller Foundation
Russell Sage Foundation
Edmund and Caroline Schott Foundation
Spencer Foundation

Summary

THE INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY conducted this study, which was funded by a consortium of foundations, with three research partners—California Tomorrow (Oakland), Designs for Change (Chicago, Illinois), and Southern Echo (Jackson, Mississippi)—and a national advisory panel. Between 1999 and 2001, the research partners surveyed and interviewed groups at eight sites: Baltimore; Chicago; Los Angeles; the Mississippi Delta; New York City; Philadelphia; the San Francisco Bay Area; and Washington, DC.

The study examines the work of 66 community groups that are organizing to improve public education in low-performing schools and districts. Largely local, community-based organizations, these groups focus on engaging public school parents and low-income families, as well as students themselves, in efforts to improve their schools. They aim to build political power and to challenge public school systems that serve children poorly.

In this document, we describe the diversity of methods and approaches groups are using and report on the groups' organizing achievements and challenges. We found that school reform organizing plays a significant role in creating the political context in which change can happen. Organizing groups focus schools on critical issues, identify and build support for key interventions, and establish a stronger sense of accountability between schools and communities. They are increasing the ability of young people, parents, and community residents to participate in local reform efforts, and they are helping members to raise essential school performance questions forcefully and persistently.

We discuss implications for educators and offer a number of recommendations for funders. These include the need to develop greater capacity in the organizing groups, create and strengthen intermediary or "support" organizations that provide technical help such as data analysis, develop better ways to measure the impact of organizing, and build more understanding and support for the work among foundations.

Oakland Community Organizations, Oakland, California

Photograph courtesy of Oakland Community Organization

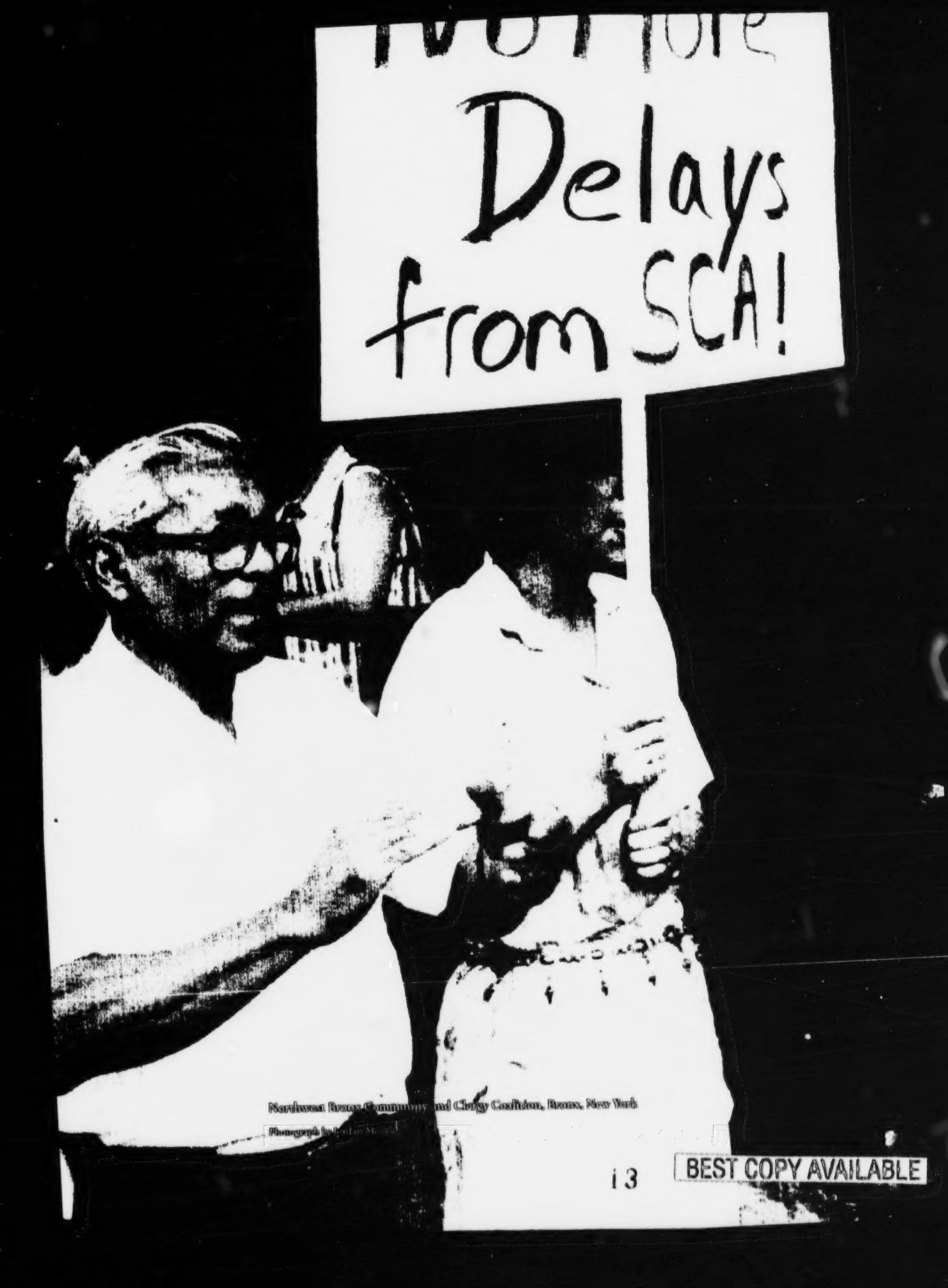
BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INTRODUCTION

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, parents and community members in distressed low-income neighborhoods are taking action to improve their local schools. They examine school performance data that show dismal student outcomes, and they raise demands to secure greater accountability as well as sufficient resources to ensure that their schools can succeed. They get involved in school board elections, form coalitions, work with the media, and engage a broad spectrum of public actors to improve public education. All these efforts are making clear, strong impacts. They have won a new small schools policy in Oakland, California; directed resources toward building new schools in the poorest, most underserved communities in Los Angeles; and brought new after-school programs to Washington, DC, schools. They have forced the removal of ineffective principals and superintendents in New York City and Mississippi, worked with teachers to improve student achievement in Chicago, and brought more rigorous math and reading programs to schools in Philadelphia.

These movements for better schools, underway primarily in urban areas, are fueled by the demands of parents and young people who are forced to experience public education's failures and have the most at stake in improving the quality of their neighborhood schools. Sometimes educators join these organizing efforts, realizing that improving their students' achievement depends on shared action with families and communities. Mostly, however, those committed to a good education for all students are organizing from outside the system. Their activism is moving districts and state education bureaucracies to focus on improving our most dysfunctional and poorly funded public schools. Although many state and federal policies now require the improvement of ineffectual schools, agencies charged with implementing those policies often lack the will and capacity to make sure that failing schools improve. These new organizing efforts work to build the necessary will and capacity.

The dramatic growth of school reform organizing across the country needs more focused attention. This movement is not only changing schools and education policy, but also is building the local grassroots leadership and institutional capacity to fight for sustained change. This report highlights the key findings of a national study of community organizing in a new era of education reform and accountability. We describe the methods, challenges, and successes of community groups organizing for school reform and we conclude with implications for educators, funders, and all those who work to improve the educational outcomes of students in poor communities.



Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, Bronx, New York

Photograph by [illegible]

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

KEY FINDINGS

1. THE FIELD OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL REFORM IS NEW AND EXPANDING RAPIDLY

WHILE PUBLIC EDUCATION ACTIVISM is hardly new in this country, the emergence of community organizing as a strategy for improvement is barely a decade old. The number and effectiveness of such organizing efforts have increased exponentially over the past ten years. Our research found 66 groups organizing for school reform in the eight study sites. Combining these with groups identified through research by others active in urban school reform, there are at least 200 community groups across the country currently engaged in struggling for better local public schools.

School reform organizing is expanding most rapidly in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color that have long suffered from unresponsive and inadequate public schools. Schools in these neighborhoods share chronic problems: crumbling and overcrowded facilities, shortages of qualified teachers, high turnover of principals and other administrative leaders, and desperately low achievement levels. Not all public schools in urban areas are like this, but community organizing usually takes place wherever conditions have become intolerable for students, families, and communities.

Many organizing groups are responding to nationwide trends that mandate standards and hold low-performing schools and students accountable for their test score performance—often without providing adequate resources to meet these new standards. Parents, youth, and community groups are increasingly publicizing the dismal performance of their schools —and the concomitant neglect by policymakers— and are fighting to make sure schools and students have the support they need to improve.

The aim of this organizing is to hold the system accountable for making public education work. Groups raise basic equity issues affecting students, such as how well schools respond to the needs of immigrant youth and whether youth of color are treated fairly. They focus on making sure schools in low-income neighborhoods reflect community values —whether their activism is initiated to prevent the takeover of schools by for-profit entities or in support of creating new, small schools when local community members are on the design team.

The work draws upon the commitment of staff and institutional resources by local community-based organizations. Some are longtime organizing groups that define education as one of many press-

ing neighborhood issues such as housing and public safety. Others are service and development groups that see successful schools as essential to rebuilding neighborhoods and maintaining healthy environments for residents. Still others have emerged from the vibrant after-school movement through which they experienced firsthand the poor quality of local schools.

These groups generally share the following common characteristics:

1. They are community-based organizations with histories of working to improve their communities.
2. They are intentionally building relationships, skills, and organizing power among parents, young people, and community residents to transform local conditions and create new opportunities.
3. They are independent of the school and school system, though some may have developed relationships with schools through other service or development activities.

Organizing efforts generally depend on one or two paid organizers and on the volunteer efforts of experienced members or leaders. Groups recruit new members in a variety of ways. Organizers meet people at churches or clubs; they distribute flyers at strategic places. Some go door-to-door to contact people. Many groups talk with parents outside the school building or meet young people through

CHICAGO
PHILADELPHIA
NEW YORK
BALTIMORE
WASHINGTON, D.C.
SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA
LOS ANGELES
MISSISSIPPI
Organizing for School Reform Initiative, 8 sites—66 groups
School reform organizing groups identified in the Education Organizing Database developed by the Cross City Campaign and Research for Action (146 total)

FIG. 1 SCHOOL REFORM ORGANIZING IN THE UNITED STATES

youth development activities offered inside the school during the school day. Sometimes organizers sponsor a special event to bring attention to their campaign, such as a school safety forum. However they recruit members, most groups support leadership development by involving members in all aspects of the work—from developing campaign plans, demands, and actions to researching possible reform solutions and working to influence politicians and the media. Creating a cadre of leaders is a central strategy for achieving their community and school transformation goals.

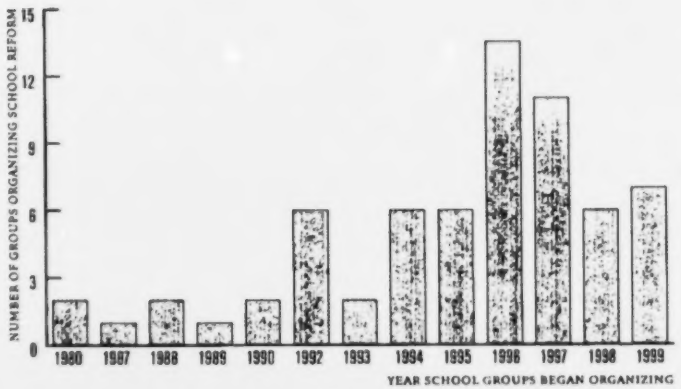


FIG. 2 GROUPS ENTERING THE FIELD OF SCHOOL REFORM ORGANIZING
The number of groups initiating school organizing increased dramatically in the latter half of the 1990s. 14 groups began school organizing.

Briefly, the following are some characteristics of the groups in our study:

- More than two-thirds rely on individual memberships; the rest are composed of member organizations such as churches or block groups. Almost 20 percent of the groups in the study are faith-based.
- A majority have multiracial memberships, and several target particular minority groups such as Cambodian high school girls, Vietnamese refugees, or Caribbean working-class families. Twenty percent include middle-income families as well as low-income or working-class members (see fig. 3).
- The majority (82 percent) focus on a variety of issues, such as environmental justice, housing, or living wage campaigns, in addition to education. A few organizations work only on education, targeting a single neighborhood school or district.
- Two-thirds are sponsored or supported by larger organizations. These include: (1) national and regional networks that support local organizing, such as the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), or the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment in Los Angeles County, and (2) organizations that offer services or develop community leadership, such as the Southwest Youth Collaborative in Chicago and the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation in New York City (see figs. 4 and 5).
- Of the organizations surveyed, 80 percent had been involved in education issues for at least four years. The groups in Chicago and New York City groups have the most experience (see fig. 7).
- Budgets range from $100,000 to $500,000, although not all the funding is for organizing on education. Most staffs are minimal; some organizations rely entirely on volunteers.

2. ORGANIZING IS IMPROVING SCHOOLS AND BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES

THE ORGANIZING GROUPS in this study believe their work has a strong impact on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for neighborhood children. Groups reported winning commitments from principals, superintendents, and school boards to implement new forms of curriculum and instruction, small schools and charter schools, improvements in staffing and professional development, and a range of changes to increase their constituents' access to high quality schooling.

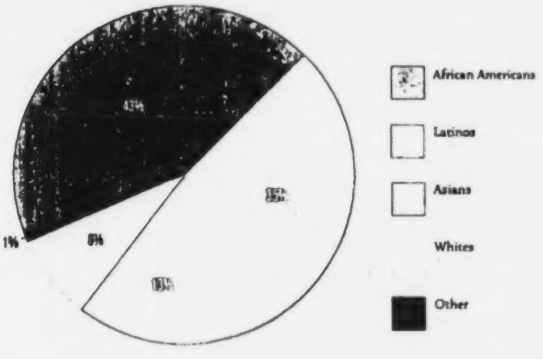


FIG. 3 RACE AND ETHNICITY OF GROUP MEMBERSHIPS

Expanding high-quality learning experiences often requires systemic change. One dramatic example is the new schools policy negotiated by a coalition of Oakland groups led by Oakland Community Organizations and the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools. After a prolonged campaign, the coalition won agreements to open ten new, small schools. The Philadelphia Student Union won support for increased professional-development time in which teachers can learn new instructional methods. In Los Angeles, South Central Youth Empowered through Action demanded and won more counselors for a high school in which students received little guidance about college admission requirements and other needs.

Groups reported victories in improving school climates as well. As figure 8 shows, they have won commitments on school climate, facilities, and safety improvements. A sexual harassment awareness campaign by Asian Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health in Los Angeles, for example, resulted in the addition of more counselors and the provision of sensitivity training for students and teachers. The Washington, DC, Interfaith Network organized facility audits of 25 schools and won an agreement from the district superintendent for immediate repairs. In Mississippi, Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County successfully lobbied the school board to renovate and expand the schools serving the African American community.

Many community groups also work to increase school accountability. Sometimes their efforts lead to the dismissal of ineffective school and school system leadership. Often such efforts result in increasing access for parent and youth participation in school governance. Group efforts to achieve greater school accountability often insert an urgent community voice into local debates about school change, and groups pursue their efforts by using data and organizing skills to demand that schools produce better results. When 200 parents, neighbors, and parishioners attended a church-sponsored meeting about the poor performance of an Oakland high school, the strength of the protest persuaded the superintendent to transfer the principal. Similar demonstrations of unified and informed organizing were reported by several other study sites.

Another effect was the strengthening of school-community links. Though organizing often improves the balance of power between schools and communities by building the strengths of parents and young people, school-community collaboration remains elusive. Still, the study found some positive signs. A number of groups persuaded schools to offer after-school mentoring and other student enrichment opportunities. The San Francisco Organizing Project helped win a commitment to establish 40 homework centers in neighborhood schools. At two Chicago elementary schools, the creation of homework centers led to opportunities to build better relationships between schools and the community and eventually to change the school cultures.

These organizing victories demonstrate significant changes in relationships, priorities, and practices after only a few years of intensive work. But such successes can be fleeting—groups' accomplishments can be reversed or diminished in a very short time. Even when district leadership is convinced to make a commitment to change, mid-level administrators often resist it. The media is eager to cover a controversial event but less interested in filing stories that track the slow pace of genuine school change. High turnover rates among administrators and teachers in low-performing schools make instructional consistency difficult to achieve. "You organize, you win, and if you're not vigilant, a lot goes back to the way it was," said an organizer from Philadelphia.

Organizing groups define their successes as intermediate steps toward the larger goal of permanent improvement in student academic achievement. Because most organizing groups do not control the implementation of the reforms they have negotiated, they face the continuing challenge of how to move the change process inside the school and how to sustain their focus on improved instruction over the extended time that school change requires.

EDUCATION ORANIZING AS A LEVER TO CHANGE LIVES

School improvement is often an intermediate goal for organizing groups committed to wide-scale societal change. Beyond improving local conditions, many groups have aims such as:

BROAD SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CAPITAL MISSIONS East Coast and Chicago neighborhood-based multi-issue organizations work to build local leadership, power, and community capacity for neighborhood improvement.

COMMUNITY-BUILDING MISSIONS Many organizations focus on creating new and more participatory decision-making norms and processes through which residents can shape the future of their neighborhoods.

CIVIL RIGHTS MISSIONS Groups working in the Mississippi Delta are fighting racial inequality. For these groups, schools are the flashpoint of a larger struggle against pervasive institutionalized racism.

YOUTH MOVEMENTS Many youth organizations attempt to make explicit linkages between school reform organizing and larger social dynamics. Public schools are the staging ground for larger battles for social justice, and schools are the terrain on which organizations connect to youth.

IMMIGRANT EMPOWERMENT Immigrant groups work to create access to educational systems for their constituents, to increase their members' participation in local democratic processes such as school board elections, and to improve the responsiveness and cultural sensitivity of their neighborhood schools.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Nonetheless, the early successes of school reform organizing efforts demonstrate that the work of community groups is critical to school improvement in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. Such groups start conversations among disparate players. They keep the focus on students. They make it possible for powerful demands for change to be heard. And they are persistent.

3. HOW THE WORK LOOKS DEPENDS ON THE CONTEXT AND CONSTITUENCY

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING to improve schools has no set menus. Sometimes an organizing effort begins with a single issue such as parents' concerns about school safety, a cultural enrichment program, or poor academic performance. The specific forms of organizing that groups develop depend on their local, state, and regional contexts, as well as on whether they are organizing youth, adults, or a specific immigrant group. In Mississippi, for example, education issues are embedded in the broader context of achieving full civil rights. In California, youth organizing arose in response to statewide anti-immigrant, anti-youth ballot initiatives that galvanized youth activism and linked these controversial issues to school problems.

In Chicago, by contrast, adult organizing was largely initiated by multi-issue neighborhood groups that had long track records of empowering communities to fight for neighborhood improvement. Many Chicago groups use local school councils, through which parents and community representatives have the power to develop school budgets and appoint school principals.

Much of the education organizing in Philadelphia and New York City also evolved from neighborhood efforts to improve housing and make other quality-of-life improvements. Context, again, determines how the organizing in those cities is carried out. In Philadelphia, the receptivity of the former superintendent to community organizing led to the creation of a funding stream for organizing, through an Annenberg Challenge grant. As one result, a majority of groups in Philadelphia try to work collaboratively with school staff in their organizing campaigns. In New York City, the historic gap between the white educational bureaucracy and communities of color, as well as the legacy of the community control movement of the late 1960s, contribute to continued mistrust between schools and community organizations. Consequently, most groups in New York City fight their way into the schooling arena. Public protests, organizing cam-

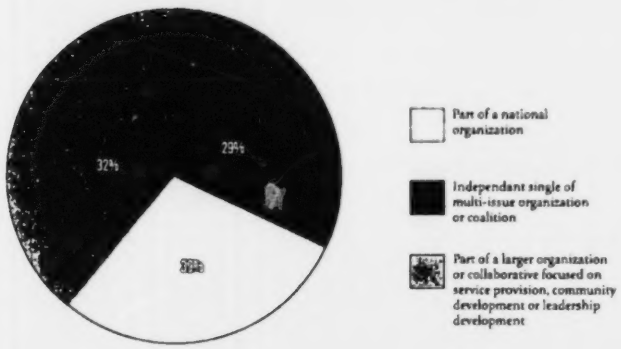

32%
29%
Part of a national organization
Independant single of multi-issue organization or coalition
Part of a larger organization or collaborative focused on service provision, community development or leadership development

FIG. 4 WHAT KINDS OF GROUPS DO THIS WORK?

paigns to draw in more people over time, and persistent use of the media help groups establish their legitimacy and gain recognition from school officials.

Among groups organizing immigrant and refugee families, young people often are the bridge across generations, cultures, and customs. Youth are more likely to be involved in activism and to draw their families into the work. Because their members are often newcomers who do not speak English and are unfamiliar with the system, these groups also tend to provide a range of services, including legal advocacy assistance.

Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)	ERASE Partners/Applied Research Center	GAMALIEL Foundation	Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF)	National People's Action (NPA)	Pacific Institute for Community Organizing (PICO)
Maryland ACORN	Alliance Organizing Project (Phila.)	Oakland Coalition of Congregations	IAF Metro (NYC)	Blocks Together (Chicago)	Central Brooklyn Churches
Illinois ACORN	Californians for Justice		Organization of the North East (affiliated with United Power for Action and Justice in Chicago)	Brighton Park Neighborhood Council (Chicago)	Community Action Project (NYC)
Oakland ACORN	Coalition for Educational Justice (LA)		Washington Interfaith Network (DC)	Northwest Neighborhood Federation (Chicago)	Oakland Community Organizations
New York ACORN (Brooklyn, Bronx)	Generation Y (Chicago)			Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition	Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project
Philadelphia ACORN	Mothers on the Move (NYC)				San Francisco Organizing Project
	Queensbridge Community in Action (NYC)				Youth United for Change (Phila.)
	South Central Youth Empowered Thru Action (LA)				
	Youth of Oakland United, PUEBLO.				

NOTE: *National organizations offer strategic support and training to increase the capacity of member groups to carry out effective school reform organizing, but they operate in different ways. ACORN, IAF and the Gamaliel Foundation establish local organizations. PICO and NPA/NTIC provide extensive strategic assistance and help member groups take coordinated action. ERASE provides local groups with tools and technical assistance for organizing on racial justice issues in the schools.*

FIG. 5 NATIONAL AFFILIATIONS

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

4. ADULT AND YOUTH ORGANIZING GROUPS TEND TO WORK SEPARATELY, BUT INTEREST IN INTERGENERATIONAL ORGANIZING IS GROWING

ROUGHLY THREE-FOURTHS of the groups in our study work with either adults or youth, but not both.

Most of the youth organizing currently occurs in the Bay Area and metropolitan Los Angeles, where almost three-fourths of the education reform groups recruit youth members. Although youth organizing groups tend to focus on specific school problems, they often frame those problems in terms of goals for youth development and leadership. Though a few youth-oriented groups are part of larger organizations that provide a continuum of opportunities for involvement, most work in isolation from adult groups. Leadership development is a critical part of all groups' work, but youth groups emphasize leadership development and training even more than their adult counterparts. Youth groups are more likely to see their organizing as part of building a movement; also, many integrate youth culture, popular education, and the provision of services into their work.

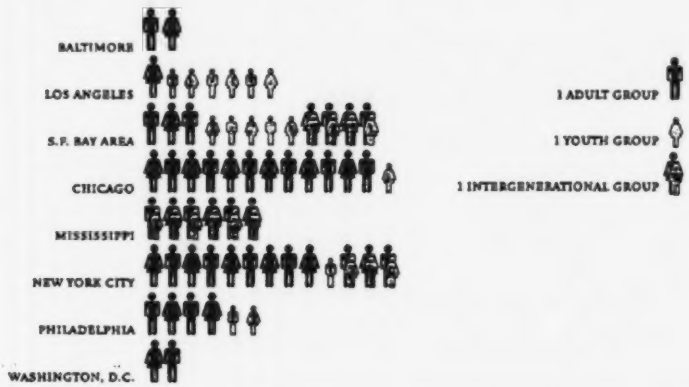


FIG. 6 YOUTH, ADULT, AND INTERGENERATIONAL ORGANIZING GROUPS BY RESEARCH SITE

The Mississippi Delta has a concentration of organizing groups that include members of all ages. All six groups included in the study work from an intergenerational organizing perspective. Many of the intergenerational groups believe in developing youth leadership to help sustain the organizing. A small number of groups with a history of separate youth and adult organizing are considering how best to integrate the two strands of work.

5. ORGANIZING IS BECOMING MORE SOPHISTICATED

ALTHOUGH ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL REFORM is relatively new, groups are using more complex and effective methods to leverage change. Many groups routinely present data that support their goals, such as the reading and suspension data that were gathered and analyzed by the Oakland Community Congregations and then distributed in "report cards" on each school. Groups are also learning how to gather and translate data to hone their demands and effectively disseminate their

messages to a wide range of audiences. In New York City, the New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee used an analysis of the school system's annual school report cards by the NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy to energize parent demands (see figs. 10 and 11 on pages 14 and 15). A simple flyer of children's faces in two groups—the 20 percent reading at grade level and the 80 percent who were failing—asked parents which group their child belonged to. The message was clear: children's academic performance did not stem from family deficits but from institutional failure. South Central Youth Empowered through Action in Los Angeles (SCYEA) used data to show that resources devoted to keeping young people in jail dwarfed resources allocated to encouraging college attendance. SCYEA used the data to argue for making investments in dropout prevention and school improvement to avoid the high costs of incarceration and to attain the long-range benefits of post-secondary education.

In addition to surveys of other parents, young people, and school staff, many community organizing groups arrange visits for members to observe high-performing schools. They conduct walk-throughs of classrooms using formal observation tools and arrange interviews with experienced educators. These strategies help parents and young people envision possibilities that transcend the dysfunctional and disillusioning environments of their local schools.

Organizing work cannot follow set patterns. Every community and every school presents a unique situation. How the organizing begins and is sustained depends on local issues and leadership. Often groups find issues that are tangible and immediate, such as inadequate school facilities or safety in the lunchroom. Producing small victories on issues is important to most groups' organizing; victories demonstrate the organization's power and build members' confidence and esteem. Early wins on tangible issues energize members and attract more participants, building power to address deeper educational problems.

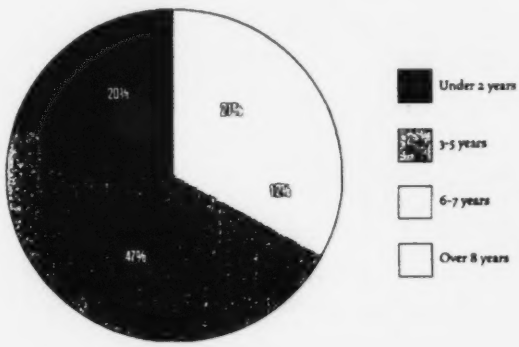


FIG. 7 EDUCATION ORGANIZING EXPERIENCE

But as groups identify and choose organizing issues, they do not progress from initial concerns about adequate facilities and safety in the lunchroom to concerns about improving the instructional core of schooling. Instead, groups seem to oscillate continuously from issues that are tangible and immediate to core issues and back again.

Groups work on facilities and safety issues because they see them as necessary to achieving quality instruction. As Alberto Retana of South Central Youth Empowered through Action (Los Angeles) noted, "It was very serious—youth were saying they can't study when ceiling tiles are falling on their head or when the air conditioning is broken." But these issues are not always easy to resolve. Groups may convince their district to repair broken windows, but it can take years to build power sufficient to change how the state raises or allocates facilities resources.

Many groups find it difficult to direct all their energies toward improving the quality of instruction their schools provide. Focusing on instruction means groups must translate complex teaching and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

learning interactions into issues that energize members and generate clear demands that can be won through direct action campaigns. Because instructional issues are so opaque, and because it is so difficult to define effective schooling interventions, many groups continue to focus on environment and climate issues as they struggle with how to improve schooling outcomes. Issues such as facilities and school climate are more likely to unify their constituencies and gain support from school staff.

New organizing efforts depend on local support organizations and often on national networks to translate complex teaching and learning problems into discrete issues with clear organizing "handles." Southern Echo, a regional organization in Mississippi, helped start six community organizing groups and continues to support their work by linking them to a state-level action group. Of the study's eight sites, only Baltimore and Washington, DC, lacked strong local support organizations when data for this study were collected. National networks provide intensive training for organizers and are developing strategies around difficult issues, such as teacher quality, that local organizers can adapt to their contexts.

High-quality learning experiences	Supportive school climates	Linkages with Community	Accountability
• Curriculum and instruction (21)	• Facilities (29)	• School attitude and culture (2)	• Parent and youth participation in governance (14)
• Small schools and charter schools (6)	• Safety (10)	• Parent involvement (6)	• Access and responsiveness (13)
• Staffing and professional development (12)		• After-school programs (6)	• Replacing ineffective school/district leaders (11)
• Equity issues (20)		• School-based health services (2)	

Groups reported the number of commitments from education decision-makers (legislators, district officials, principals and others) to implement the organizing groups' agendas. Sixty-five commitments were reported across all of the groups in the study in the area of high quality learning experiences. This category includes commitment on a wide range of campaigns focused on curriculum and instruction (such as a new math program), small schools and charter schools, staffing and professional development and equity issues. The number of commitments on campaigns is indicated for each subcategory in the table above. "Equity issues" refers to a range of access and opportunity concerns, such as academic tracking, the criminalization of youth (police in schools, suspensions, and unfair discipline policies), inadequate funding, the inequitable distribution of existing resources among schools, and the over-referral of students to special education.

FIG. 8 WHAT ARE GROUPS WINNING?

Many community organizing groups are involved in citywide, regional, or statewide coalitions, some longstanding and some temporary; 80 percent of the groups surveyed for this report were working in coalitions formed to improve district or state education policy. Coalitions come together most often to achieve a specific policy change, such as starting small schools or reducing discriminatory discipline practices, but others are ongoing. The Parent Organizing Consortium in New York City, for example, keeps eight neighborhood-based organizing groups in regular contact with each other.

Organizing groups join issue-based coalitions to leverage their political capital into broader and more powerful efforts to influence the highly politicized decision-making processes in district, city, and state bureaucracies as shown in figure 12. Working in coalitions requires blending different organizational styles and perspectives—coalition politics and lobbying methods can conflict with the direct-action tactics and the participatory norms of some organizing groups. It is also difficult to keep members involved over extended policy campaigns; the daily pressures of members' lives and the lack of concrete, winnable benchmarks work against sustained participation. Multi-issue groups may be bet-

ter able to balance local organizing with working in coalitions because they can engage members in other local campaigns.

Because business organizations, academic institutions, unions, and other sectors with power and legitimacy are less frequently involved in these coalitions, community groups have less access to educational power brokers. (ACORN and IAF are exceptions. Both organizations have developed local alliances with unions at several sites.) Also, as figure 9 shows, education reform groups and organizing groups often do not speak the same language or take similar approaches, even when they share the same concerns. In contrast, business, foundations, and higher-education institutions in Chicago have more than a decade of experience in supporting community organizing groups and local school councils.

We're measuring our impact by what we get committed, but ultimately, an indication of improved academic achievement in the schools is the only one that counts.

—Claire Crawford, South Brox ACORN

In a few important instances, teachers have become allies of community organizing efforts. In Philadelphia and Chicago, for example, teachers and organizing groups realized they have mutual goals, such as more time for professional development. These are exceptions, however. In Tunica County, Mississippi, teachers who attended meetings with organizing groups were singled out by district administrators as troublemakers and threatened. Too often, teachers do not trust organizing activities, and some have used their power to make school life difficult for youth and parents involved in organizing.

Still, many groups consistently develop strategies to create linkages among teachers, parents, and youth. The Logan Square Neighborhood Association in Chicago trains and places parent reading mentors and tutors in classrooms, and each of the ten schools in the project appointed a staff person to serve as a liaison. Organizing projects in Philadelphia bring teachers and parents together and help parents become

ISSUES CENTRAL TO THE LEARNING COMMUNITY OF EDUCATORS IN SCHOOL REFORM	ISSUES CENTRAL TO THE AGENDAS OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS AND THEIR CONSTITUENCIES
• Professional collaboration and creating learning communities	• Discipline and the criminalization of youth
• Authentic assessment and examination of student work	• Distribution of resources
• New teacher support	• Tracking
• Standards implementation	• High-stakes learning
• Role of the district in reform	• Curriculum inclusiveness (e.g., ethnic studies, etc.)
• Site management	• Youth empowerment
• Academic support programs and interventions	• Safety
• Literacy development	• Quality of teaching and relationships
• Instructional strategies for English learners	• Language access and bilingual education
• Block scheduling, "families" and academy groupings, and other structural forms of creating smaller and more personalized units	• Facilities (e.g., repairs, overcrowding, toxics materials)
	• Quality of relationships—how children and parents are treated
	• Superintendent selection
	• School privatization

FIG. 9 CENTRAL ISSUES OF EDUCATORS VERSUS COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS
Education reform groups and organizing groups often do not speak the same language or take similar approaches, even when they share the same concerns.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

informed partners in school reform discussions. The Oakland Community Organizations developed a staff position specifically to build support among teachers for their small-schools campaign.

A hopeful sign is the outreach that teachers themselves are initiating. The new Coalition for Educational Justice in Los Angeles, started by progressive teachers, is enlisting parents and youth in its efforts to oppose high-stakes testing and other state directives. Collaborations between unions and local organizing groups are forming in Baltimore, New York City, Philadelphia, and San Francisco. The Alliance Organizing Project in Philadelphia supported the teachers union in a contract dispute, and ACORN has formed alliances with teachers over specific issues such as smaller schools in the Bay Area and opposition to private-sector control of schools in New York City.

6. GROUPS ARE ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF ACCESS, LEGITIMACY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING to improve schools might be less necessary if school leaders understood how much their own effectiveness depends on partnerships with parents and communities. Because large bureaucracies tend to be embattled, isolated, and defensive, schools and school systems often erect barriers that fuel antagonisms and prevent communication. The key task of community organizing is to learn how to reduce, if not overcome, those barriers.

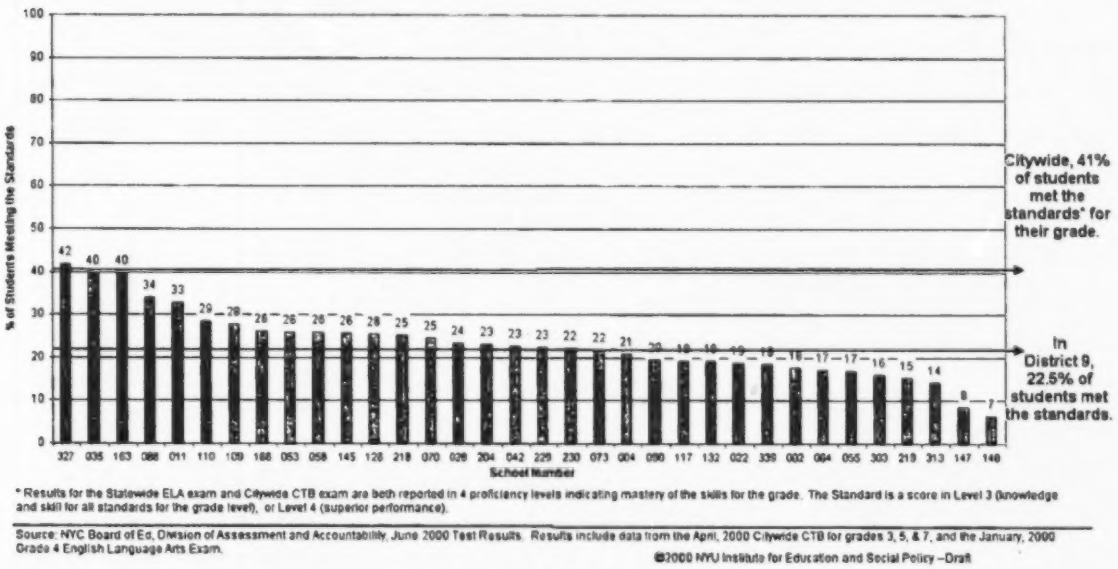

% of Students Meeting the Standards
School Number
Citywide, 41% of students met the standards* for their grade.
In District 9, 22.5% of students met the standards.
* Results for the Statewide ELA exam and Citywide CTB exam are both reported in 4 proficiency levels indicating mastery of the skills for the grade. The Standard is a score in Level 3 (knowledge and skill for all standards for the grade level), or Level 4 (superior performance).
Source: NYC Board of Ed, Division of Assessment and Accountability, June 2000 Test Results. Results include data from the April, 2000 Citywide CTB for grades 3, 5, & 7, and the January, 2000 Grade 4 English Language Arts Exam.
©2000 NYU Institute for Education and Social Policy –Draft

FIG. 10 1999–2000 READING TEST RESULTS FOR DISTRICT 9

This data presentation shows reading achievement for schools in a local sub-district in New York City. It was prepared for the New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee by the New York University Insitute for Education and Social Policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Initially, the most significant challenge for organizing is access. As outsiders to the bureaucracy, most groups organized to pursue school improvements do not easily obtain the data they need. Such data should be timely, broken down to show the progress of subgroups within a school or district, comprehensive, and clear.

Physical access also is important. Organizing groups need ongoing dialogue with teachers and administrators about how to improve failing schools, and they should be able to observe a school's instructional environment.

Unfortunately, many schools and districts are resistant or even antagonistic to parents and community leaders who are unwilling to participate on the school's limited terms. Suddenly, basic data become unavailable, as do access to classrooms and opportunities for honest discussions with school staffs.

Such mistrust leads community groups to use various strategies to get the information and access they need. Some file Freedom of Information Act requests or stage protest events, especially to get media attention. Others, like ACORN in New York City, conduct extensive research on their own and publicize the results widely. An exception to this tug-of-war environment is Chicago, where the state-mandated local school councils help community organizing groups gain access to schools through direct participation on these councils or through training programs for parent members.

In most cases, organizing groups gain access by developing strategic relationships with principals or with groups of influential teachers. This is easier when parents and groups stick to traditional types of involvement or focus on district or state-level policies the school doesn't control. But developing strategic relationships becomes difficult and may lead to hostility when parents and other community members press on sensitive school issues such as the quality of bilingual education or high school

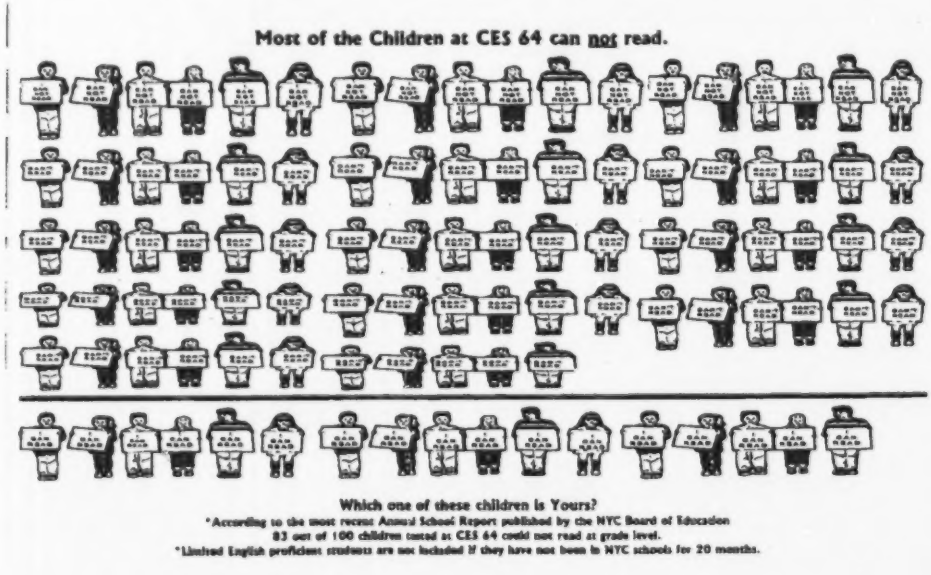

Most of the Children at CES 64 can not read.
Which one of these children is Yours?
*According to the most recent Annual School Report published by the NYC Board of Education
83 out of 100 children tested at CES 64 could not read at grade level.
*Limited English proficient students are not included if they have not been in NYC schools for 20 months.

FIG. 11 MOST OF THE CHILDREN CAN'T READ

In New York City, the New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee used the analysis of the school system's annual report cards to energize parent demands.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

graduation rates. If that happens, organizing groups often must create a wider base with clout at district, regional, or national levels.

Another challenge is to create legitimacy for the organizing work. Any outside group wrestles with this problem, because school-level educators and insider parents often object to a group that challenges the traditional parent-teacher association. School officials may dismiss as unimportant any parent who is not part of the "official" parent organization. Often their negativity results from political and social isolation; because they are not closely connected to the community, they are unaware of the concerns and mobilization within it.

CITY, STATE, AND REGIONAL COALITIONS FOR POLICY CHANGE
SOCIAL CAPITAL
POLITICAL CAPITAL
COMMUNITY CAPACITY
(The ability of communities to meet multiple needs)
COMMUNITY ORGANIZING
(Democratic engagement and collective action)
PARENTS, YOUNG PEOPLE, AND COMMUNITY RESIDENTS

FIG. 12 FROM LOCAL ORGANIZING TO POLICY CHANGE
Community organizing generates social capital (the networks and relationships between members) and political capital (the clout and competence a community can wield to influence public decisions in order to obtain resources, services, and opportunities from the public and private sectors). Social capital functions horizontally at the community level. Political capital, however, enables community groups to challenge the structural relationships that define the level of resources and quality of services their communities receive. Groups join coalitions to leverage their organizational political capital for broader policy change.

Most organizing groups start by proving their worth as community representatives. They build a parent, youth, or community base for school change that genuinely reflects community concerns. Some work with an existing outside group; for example, New Settlement Apartments in New York City linked with parents through its after-school program. Others, such as the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council in Chicago, go door-to-door to build a base of parents who may never have been involved with traditional parent organizations. Many groups work through established neighborhood institutions such as churches or tenant associations.

Groups often gain legitimacy by tackling issues that benefit school administrators. The Northwest Neighborhood Federation in Chicago, for example, initially faced hostility from principals, but this attitude changed when the Federation fought at the district level for more adequate school facilities.

Members' ability to skillfully negotiate issues also helps establish an organization's legitimacy. Successful organizations work through the barriers imposed by hostile school staffs by providing training and other developmental experiences such as school visits that demystify what schools do and arm parents or young people with both data and knowledge. When parents in organizing groups demonstrate their knowledge of conditions and speak out at city or national forums, they gain the respect and attention of school officials.

Alliances with other groups that can generate national attention also help establish the organization's legitimacy. A report on suspensions produced by Generation Y in Chicago, for example, earned the group local and national recognition. Because the group and its report acted on clear equity princi-

ples, the schools were responsive, according to Generation Y's youth organizer, Jeremy Lahoud, "even if they might wish we weren't there."

Another challenge groups are learning to overcome is how to decode diffuse and opaque governance structures to determine who is accountable for what. Principals may be the initial targets for demands about improving school performance, but they are part of a system with many players—mayors, councils, district and subdistrict administrators, and even their own site councils. Often regionally based and heavily financed school reform organizations, such as those dominated by education and business groups in Los Angeles and in the Bay Area, become obstacles to community-led reform.

When responsibility for results is diffused, the players often resort to blaming each other for school failure. To thwart this blame game, several organizing groups target their district's political structures as the entities ultimately accountable. At several sites, organizing groups hold mayors accountable because they have been given responsibility for the school systems. Other groups seek changes by altering their local school boards. In Tunica County, Mississippi, and in Harlem, organizing groups won seats on local school boards. In San Francisco, Youth Making Change campaigned for and won new positions for students on the school board.

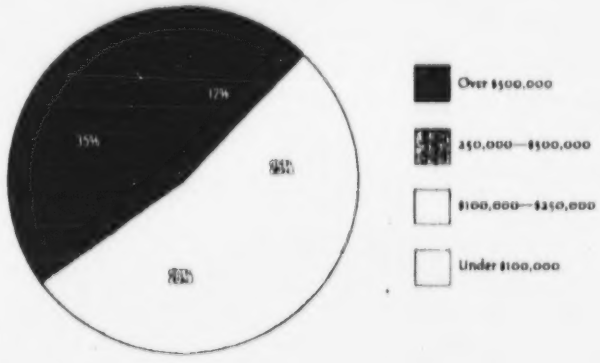


FIG. 13 ANNUAL BUDGETS OF ORGANIZING GROUPS
Budgets range from $100,000 to $500,000, although not all the funding is for organizations or education. Most staffs are minimal, some organizations rely entirely on volunteers.

Organizing groups use a variety of other strategies to break down the barriers erected by defensive school and district practitioners. Some groups try to work with existing parent-teacher associations; others try to take them over. Youth groups often target the school-sanctioned structures for youth participation in order to develop a strong voice. The tension is always between being co-opted, if the organizing group tries to work within the school structure, and being forced into confrontational relationships if working from the outside.

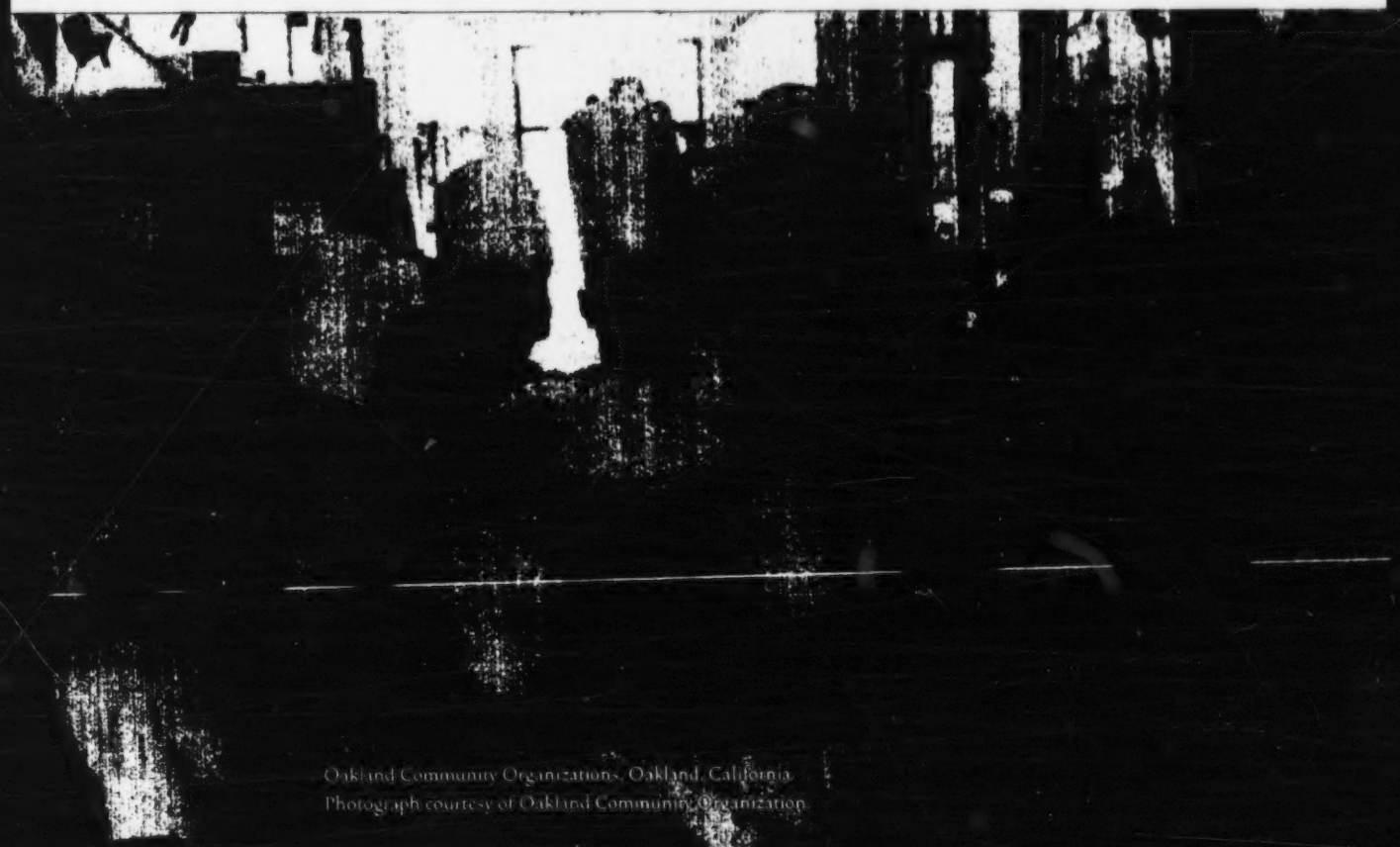
A few organizing groups such as ACORN, the Industrial Areas Foundation, and the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation in New York City have provided alternatives to the system by opening new, small schools. Some organizing groups build relationships with regular schools by providing needed services. An example is the youth centers for mentoring, leadership training, and parent activities sponsored by Asian American LEAD in the District of Columbia.

The study's data indicate that experienced groups use several strategies at once. They rarely work only inside or outside schools, or employ only a confrontational or collaborative approach. Groups may begin as outside catalysts, but then try to develop relationships with individual teachers and the teachers union. Groups may start by collaborating with schools and then move to figuring out how to raise sensitive issues about student performance. Organizing work is constantly shifting and being renegotiated as school or district leadership and issues change.

7. THE WORK NEEDS SUPPORT TO SCALE UP

ORGANIZING TO IMPROVE poor-performing urban schools faces some formidable challenges in becoming a vital force for school improvement. Most of all, community organizing for school reform needs sufficient support. Organizing groups argue that education is more difficult to navigate than any other neighborhood issue because school systems are harder to penetrate and school leadership often is more insulated and unresponsive than the leadership of other public institutions. Groups need skilled organizers who balance political know-how with organizing capabilities, but where can communities find them? A few youth groups consciously recruit new staff from their members. In New York City, three adult organizing groups formed the Training Institute for Careers in Organizing to recruit, train, and mentor organizers for their staffs. The national Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, based in Chicago has developed an introductory training curriculum for education organizers.

Current efforts to develop a cadre of skilled organizers fill only a fraction of the national need, and insufficient salaries threaten the stability of many organizing groups. Expanding the work depends on enlarging the staffs of the organizations and convincing traditional funders of community development and school reform that community organizing is essential.



Oakland Community Organizations, Oakland, California
Photograph courtesy of Oakland Community Organization

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING to improve low-performing schools can bring new energy and provide vital leverage to those inside schools who are working to improve achievement for all students. Community organizing strategies—though threatening to many educators—can provide the necessary force in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color to overcome decades of neglect. Because independent groups of parents, youth, and community residents can develop the local power necessary to demand reform and to win the resources to support reform, educators can benefit in several ways from working with organizing groups.

First, community groups help raise core schooling issues of equity, accountability, and access. Often, groups do this by building relationships with a core of teachers and administrators to form a united effort to turn low-performing schools around. Groups in Chicago, urban areas of California and the East Coast, and rural communities in the Mississippi Delta are fighting for culturally responsive and academically effective schooling environments for their children. In the process, they are uncovering and highlighting persistent patterns of poor school performance and district neglect. They are intervening in political and bureaucratic processes to make school officials more accountable—or to replace them, if necessary.

Second, organizing groups are potential allies for educators who are trying to change schools from the inside. Superintendents facing entrenched middle management can gain leverage from the pressure applied by external groups. Community groups' efforts can broaden districts' accountability agendas, expanding them beyond punitive assessment systems by demanding that the broader political environment provide the necessary resources and leadership to improve schools rather than punish them. Outside groups can spotlight inadequate school funding, inexperienced teachers and administrators, overcrowded classrooms, and dilapidated school buildings, and can help create the public will to improve those conditions.

Community organizing groups value democratic processes, and in some places this has aligned them with educators to protest hierarchical or arbitrary policies. In spite of how poorly public schools have performed in their neighborhoods, these groups are committed to preserving public education and have been vocal, active, and effective in several struggles. Community groups in New York City and Philadelphia, for example, have been deeply engaged in fights against district efforts to turn over management of low-performing schools to for-profit companies.

Data from this study indicate that a wide gap exists between education reform interests and the work of organizing groups. Some of that difference is a matter of style, some springs from power structures that determine whose voice is powerful enough to shape reform demands, and some reflects dis-

agreements over priorities. Although, as in Oakland's collaboration between the Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools and the Oakland Community Organizations, there are some beginning efforts to link school reform organizations with community groups, most traditional reform groups operate as if community linkages were unnecessary.

We try to get parents on issues that they are passionate about and then hook them into other things. Parents are not yet outraged that their students can be retained if they miss twenty days of school, but they are outraged about a kid being shot. So, we train them on how to read research about youth shootings and how to get data. We show the connection between the issue and their schools.

—Mildred Wiley, Community Organizing for Re-neighborzing, Bethel New Life, Inc. Chicago

The attitude by the school board is that (issues) need to come from the school, and that doesn't include students. It means staff. So, we support the girls and have them articulate their experiences, and they give voice to their own experiences, and it's harder for school officials to refute them. We also develop community support through coalitions with parents and other organizations and with elected officials. That coalition was able to really show we're all stakeholders and we all care. . . .

—Betty Hung, Asians and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health

A number of sites report the beginnings of collaboration between community groups and educators or their unions, but too few schools and districts understand community organizing or are open to working with groups on shared concerns. As the site profiles indicate, superintendents often react defensively to local groups that probe schooling problems. Often they try to fend off or discredit the groups rather than find ways to work with them. School and district administrators tend to react negatively to community groups' bringing lots of parents and community members to meetings and are often dismissive of parent and youth representatives.

Such attitudes imperil what has the potential to become public education's most important new ally. Collaboration with a wide range of powerful neighborhood and citywide constituencies is essential to transforming low expectations and poor teaching, as well as challenging the district structures and policies that have enforced neglect of schools in low-income communities for decades.

Emerging policy trends at state and federal levels are ending the ability of school districts to hide or shield poor public school performance. These policies mandate not only that school-level data on key performance indicators be collected, but also that the data be reported publicly on a regular basis. Indeed, recent federal and state regulations require data to be broken down by race, ethnicity, and gender for each school and district. Educators and community organizing groups need to use this new information about school performance to develop mutual improvement agendas that benefit children whose education has been downgraded for too long. Learning how to collaborate is key to developing this joint work; schools and districts cannot generate the improvement their children desperately need if school administrators, teachers, and community groups are continually at odds.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUNDERS

ORGANIZING GROUPS working for fair, equitable, and quality education serve the public good in multiple ways. The public benefits of these efforts, however, will remain limited unless the work of such groups develops greater capacity by securing more stable resources.

Efforts to expand and strengthen school reform organizing must overcome four key impediments.

1. Community organizing groups are severely under-funded.
2. There are not enough local support organizations to assist community groups organizing for school reform. Without such assistance, existing community organizing groups will not be able to sustain themselves and too few new groups will enter the field.
3. Community organizing groups and the organizations that fund and provide strategic assistance to them need better and more appropriate ways to assess the impact of the organizing work.
4. Not enough philanthropic organizations understand or are committed to funding and sustaining this work.

The data from the study's eight sites suggest four ways to expand the resources necessary to support community organizing.

1. BUILD GREATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY AMONG COMMUNITY GROUPS ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL REFORM

Many groups are operating on minimal budgets. To shore up their work and increase its scale enough to achieve significant school improvement will require increased financial support focused on several priorities:

- Increase funding to hire community organizers who will help communities work together for school reform.
- Invest in the professionalism of the organizers by providing living wages and opportunities for skill-building.
- Extend funding cycles to sustain the long-term work of changing entrenched education policies and practice.

2. INVEST IN CREATING OR EXPANDING THE EFFORTS OF LOCAL SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS

COMMUNITY ORGANIZING GROUPS rely on help from local, regional, and national networks and support organizations. These organizations provide tools and training to help groups analyze their schools' inadequacies and plan reform strategies. They help groups gain access to the wider world of school reform efforts and identify allies, and they link groups doing complementary work. Our research indicates that there are not enough of these support organizations. Additional funding should be provided to

- invest in the development of local support organizations that provide strategic help to organizing groups;
- increase the capacity of these local support organizations to expand sharing and learning across groups, constituencies, cities, networks, and coalitions;
- expand the supply of organizers for community groups through training institutes or other programs that recruit and train organizers;
- support the capacity of organizing groups to collect and analyze data, use effective organizing strategies, develop training resources and tools for action, and learn how to influence the politics of decision-making in education.

3. DEVELOP BETTER WAYS TO MEASURE THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL REFORM

THIS STUDY, like the work of other groups analyzing organizing efforts, cautions against using one-dimensional indicators of success such as student test scores. The impact of organizing efforts takes time to be felt; it may result in the replacement of ineffective principals or superintendents, in the adoption of new instructional programs, the raising of teacher expectations, or gradual but significant changes in school cultures. Recording such changes requires sufficient time as well as more sophisticated methods than those used in traditional assessment.

When school cultures begin to change, for example, the most telling early indicator might be increased student and teacher attendance. Changes might also be reflected in decreasing referrals to special education programs and fewer suspensions and expulsions. The percentage of students who enter college preparatory classes or who successfully complete Advanced Placement exams might increase. As low-performing schools continue to improve, more parents become involved and the schools attract a higher-quality teaching force. The district may take notice by increasing resources, improving facilities, and recognizing accomplishments. All these indicators of progress are routinely collected by many urban districts. The challenge is to integrate them into the work of organizing groups so that they can assess their influence accurately.

Organizing groups have an even greater challenge in determining their overall effectiveness. Our research indicates that almost all the organizing groups we studied are as committed to building the social and political capital of their neighborhoods as they are to improving the education of their neighborhood's students. It is therefore both possible and necessary to develop indicators of increased community capacity for this burgeoning reform work. Resources are needed to develop measures of what organizing for school reform is achieving, including

- increases in community participation in school reform efforts and the extent of neighborhood transformation that results from increased community organizing;
- the extent of instructional, organizational, and cultural change occurring in schools;
- changes in student outcomes as a result of community organizing.

4. BUILD UNDERSTANDING OF AND SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZING WITHIN THE PHILANTHROPIC COMMUNITY

FOUNDATION SUPPORT IS CRITICAL to sustaining and expanding this work. The philanthropic community is often more focused on the strategies of traditional reform groups than on community organizing for school reform. Our research indicates, however, that community organizing can advance and buttress foundation-supported education reform efforts, because successful community organizing provides the external leverage these efforts often require.We therefore urge expansion of efforts within the foundation community to

- create opportunities to increase foundation staff and board knowledge about community organizing's contribution to school reform, and develop opportunities to demonstrate that lasting education reform requires organized community support, understanding, and advocacy;
- help funders see the critical roles youth organizing groups can play in leveraging school reform;
- help funders link organizing to other foundation-supported school reform efforts and recognize the importance of including community organizing groups in the development of grant goals and requirements.

Asian Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health

Courtesy of Asian Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

PROFILES

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

Immigrant Girls Confront Sexual Harassment in Their Schools

ASIAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDERS FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH (APIRH) is a social, political, and economic justice organization fighting for Asian and Pacific Islander (API) women's liberation in the arena of reproductive freedom. APIRH believes that if women and girls are to have true reproductive freedom, they must have the economic, social, and political power to make healthy decisions for themselves and their families at work, at home, and in all other areas of their lives. Key strategies that APIRH employs include community organizing, leadership development, popular education, community building and participatory action research.

Girls and women in immigrant Asian families traditionally have limited choices in the roles they can play in the home, community, and school. APIRH has been working for more than a decade to challenge these limitations.One of APIRH's primary commitments is to ensuring the health and safety of young API women in their schools. Most recently, APIRH was involved in a campaign to protect young Cambodian women from sexual harassment at their high school in Long Beach California. In 1997 APIRH launched the School Safety Campaign, in which Cambodian members reframed the public notion of school safety to include the protection of young women's reproductive health and succeeded in achieving six new policy changes and the development of a task force on school safety for girls in Long Beach.

The School Safety Campaign tackled an issue that some parents were uncomfortable with—sexual harassment—but its groundwork in building leadership skills among Cambodian girls won the day. For example, APIRH members held an accountability session for school leaders, students, and community leaders at a Cambodian Temple, where their parents were more likely to attend than if the meeting had been at a school. The organization drew on Cambodian culture through oral history, a community photo exhibit, and dramatic performances to get across its message and involve the broader community in its effort. The campaign not only established the girls as leaders in the school, but also challenged stereotypes about girls' roles in the family and community. For the first time, according to an APIRH organizer, "parents understood what their daughters were doing. They were surprised by what their daughters could do."

As a result of the campaign, the school showed a video about sexual harassment to all 4,500 students at Poly High School's preregistration and made advocates from the Sexual Help Crisis agency available to

answer follow-up questions from students. The school also agreed to provide training for teachers and peer counselors to deal with sexual harassment. APIRH developed sexual harassment educational materials for students and faculty, devised a more accessible informational brochure on the school's sexual harassment policy, and developed a more student-friendly grievance form and reporting procedure.

The project uncovered other issues for future organizing, such as the absence of Cambodian culture from the school curriculum and the lack of foreign-language courses and limited-English-proficiency classes. The girls revealed that they experienced gender tracking and that they felt they were not given equal resources to prepare for college.

Our mission is not just to change policies but also to change norms, values and assumptions, to expand opportunities and roles and to challenge dominant frameworks.

—Betty Hung, Asian and Pacific Islanders for Reproductive Health, Los Angeles

APIRH exposed a problem that was very real to the Cambodian girls but which they initially had felt helpless to address. The project gave them self-confidence and organizing skills, qualities that the organizers believe will benefit the Cambodian community for some time to come. It also changed Long Beach's perception of the Cambodian community and provided real opportunities for young API women to become spokespeople and leaders in their community. APIRH continues to address issues of reproductive freedom among API women and girls and is working with other organizations to increase the base of Asian and Pacific Islanders involved in the reproductive-rights movement.

CONCERNED CITIZENS FOR A BETTER TUNICA COUNTY

Mississippi Citizens Confront Racism—and Win

IN 1990, Tunica County, devastated by centuries of segregation, neglect, and economic disenfranchisement, was the second poorest county in the nation. Its school system, 99.8 percent of whose students are black, was on state probation because of low performance. This Mississippi Delta community was not one where miracles would be expected.

With the introduction of riverboat gambling, the county's income tripled in the early 1990s. At that time, Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County was formed to push for a first-rate public education for the African American community. Concerned Citizens exposed the monopoly over resources that was exercised by the white political establishment and redirected funds to the predominantly African American public schools. This work is challenging the plantation mentality that has long characterized Mississippi politics.

Concerned Citizens first created an alliance with the school board and successfully negotiated with the county board of supervisors to set aside 20 percent of the casino tax revenues for the public schools. Its base of community support forced the school board to negotiate over how new facility funds raised in a bond issue would be used. The school board initially proposed building a new elementary school near new, mostly white housing in order to appease white constituents' desire for their own school. But Concerned Citizens persuaded the school board to give priority to renovating and

expanding the schools serving the African American community. Its data on where the needs were most obvious were hard to refute.

In 1997, the state department of education proposed abolishing the school district in favor of a state-run system. Again, Concerned Citizens fought for the wishes of the community; a state-appointed conservator took over the district instead of abolishing it. When the proposal to build a new school resurfaced, the conservator favored placing the new school where no population yet existed in order to attract wealthier white families to settle in the area. With legal help, and despite lobbying against community wishes by political leaders, including the U.S. Senate Majority Leader of that time, Concerned Citizens was able to move the school site closer to the black community. In 2000, candidates aligned with Concerned Citizens won a majority on the school board.

Like other community organizing groups in the Delta, Concerned Citizens is intergenerational, focusing on building leadership skills in young people who will carry on the work. Also, it is one of several groups that receive assistance from Southern Echo in the form of training and technical and legal aid. Southern Echo helped launch the Mississippi Education Working Group to support local work. These victories represent the first time in Mississippi that a coalition of grassroots community organizations, rooted in and led by the African American community, has been formed to make an impact on public education policy at the state level in order to support the work at the community level. Through the coalition, service, social justice, and advocacy groups throughout the state are learning about each other's missions and activities.

Logan Square Neighborhood Association

Chicago Parents Partner with Schools to Improve Teaching and Learning

THE LOGAN SQUARE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION (LSNA), serving communities in Chicago, began neighborhood organizing in the 1960s. Its founding premise is that the people directly affected by local problems should shape their solutions. When the Chicago School Reform Law created local school councils in 1988, LSNA saw an opportunity to help parents and community members improve their schools.

We don't want to get pigeon-holed into various schools and their individual problems (like water fountains). Instead, we want to build a constituency and attack macro issues at a system level, and then hold the system accountable for progress in schools.

—Mitch Kline, Baltimore ACORN

LSNA began by helping parents run for local school council elections and fight successfully for the construction of seven new school buildings in the heavily overcrowded area. Through the overcrowding fight, LSNA brought together school principals, teachers, and parents around a vision of making schools centers of community. From this collaboration grew LSNA's Parent Mentor program, which employs more than 100 parents, mostly women, to work two hours per day in classrooms. Then the collaborators turned to building evening community learning centers in their schools. For the first school, parents knocked on more than 500 doors to interview families and businesses about the services that they wanted the center to offer. Through this work, LSNA began to develop a reputation as an organization that could bring valuable new resources and programs to schools. LSNA now runs community centers in six schools and parent

programs in seven. LSNA convinced mortgage lenders to offer incentives for teachers to buy housing in the area. These successes encouraged school staff to be more receptive to parents.

Parents develop LSNA's specific school improvement initiatives. In seven schools, parents are trained to be classroom-based reading mentors and tutors to help improve reading achievement. Each school appointed a staff person to coordinate the work of LSNA parents and train them in the literacy methods being used by the school. LSNA staff help teachers work effectively with parent mentors. Parent volunteers have worked with teachers to hold Family Reading Nights, helped establish bilingual lending libraries for parents, and even produced a play addressing the pressures felt by overworked mothers in order to stimulate discussion among school staff. Parents also help produce a yearly "links to literacy" reading celebration that brings together the best readers from 12 schools in a joint celebration at the Logan Square Park.

LSNA recently helped create a new bilingual teacher-training program at one of its school-based community centers. To increase the supply of qualified teachers, LSNA identified bilingual parent mentors, teacher aides, and community center students who had an interest in becoming teachers. LSNA collaborated with Chicago State University to get a grant to offer courses at the neighborhood school at no cost to the 45 participants.

LSNA's initiatives have contributed to achievement gains at its member schools. In its six core schools, the percent of students reading at or above the national average in 1990 ranged from 10.9 percent to 22.5 percent. By 2000, the percent of students reading at or above the national average ranged from 25.4 percent to 35.9 percent.

NEW SETTLEMENT APARTMENTS PARENT ACTION COMMITTEE
Demanding Change from the Outside

DURING THE 1980S the South Bronx came to symbolize the total decay of America's inner cities—poverty, crime, abandoned housing, economic stagnation, and failing schools. Community residents, however, were determined to challenge the lack of resources and power that gave rise to these seemingly intractable problems. New Settlement Apartments (NSA) opened in 1990, renovating a block of abandoned buildings into housing for 900 low-income families. NSA's vision of community revitalization led the organization to take on other neighborhood issues. When a group of frustrated parents voiced its concerns about the local schools in 1996, NSA responded by holding workshops on parents' rights. A core group of parents attending these workshops formed the Parent Action Committee (PAC), which has spearheaded a community-wide school improvement effort over the past six years.

The story of PAC involves many players. NSA helped parents acquire the skills and resources to start their effort. It provided space and staff to support their work and made connections to larger efforts across the city, as well as to technical assistance from the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy. The parents, however, were the driving force behind the organizing. As they learned more about the schools in their district, they began asking questions. They became rightfully indignant when officials failed to provide clear answers.

Rebuffed by school and district leadership, PAC took its concerns to the school board. It decided to focus on the elementary school that serves the apartment complex and to draw more parents into the campaign by sharing data at local meetings. The elementary school, PAC told parents, was third from last among 657 elementary schools in the city. Only 17 percent of the students were reading at grade level. The parents realized that this was school failure at its worst, yet the principal and superintendent blamed parents for their children's low achievement and denied that serious problems existed at the school.

Meeting weekly at breakfast and evening sessions, PAC developed a picture of why the school was failing. A visit to a successful school with similar students convinced PAC members that they needed new leadership at their school. This became their goal. They canvassed the neighborhood, collecting more than 1,000 signatures on a petition to remove the school's principal. After being rebuffed by the superintendent, they took their cause to the district's chancellor—in a dramatic way that drew press attention. The principal finally resigned.

PAC members helped select a new principal, but as often happens, they found it difficult to play an inside role on the principal selection committee while maintaining pressure from the outside. The new principal was as hostile to PAC as the previous one and was pressured to resign from the school a year later. A new principal who welcomed PAC's involvement collaborated on parent-led investigations of school safety and of the math program. NSA donated funds to hire a mentor for the principal. In 2001, NSA and PAC helped start a coalition of school reform organizing groups, including three organizations new to education and community organizing, with the goal of building a district-wide parent committee powerful enough to hold district leadership accountable.

NEW YORK CITY ACORN
Parents and Teachers Unite against School Privatization

IN 2001, parents overwhelmingly rejected a city plan to privatize five failing public schools in New York City. Led by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN), they voted 4–1 against turning over their schools to the for-profit Edison Project. Now ACORN is working with the local teachers union, the United Federation of Teachers, to call for an infusion of new resources and expertise to transform these schools. Although teachers unions and parent groups often talk about the importance of working together, few such collaborations exist. ACORN is at the forefront of efforts to build teacher-parent partnerships around the country.

ACORN began education organizing in New York City in 1988. It started with concrete issues, focusing on asbestos removal and the poor quality of school lunches. It then began gathering data, building local leadership, and advocating at a citywide level for education reform. ACORN's membership in the city has grown to 22,000. Members participate in local and citywide campaigns on issues such as affordable housing and raising the minimum wage for city workers.

The ACORN Schools Office is governed by a citywide education committee composed of 150 members elected from each neighborhood and school. Most of the members have received ACORN training. The committee, in turn, is represented on ACORN's National Executive Board. ACORN's first major success was to win placement of a new elementary school in an overcrowded area of Brooklyn. Buoyed by this win, the ACORN leadership decided not to wait on incremental changes in some schools. Instead, it began a campaign to open autonomous schools designed by parents. So far, ACORN has been instrumental in the development of three new small high schools and one elementary school, all supervised by the ACORN Schools Office. It also has won representation for ACORN members on community school boards, pushed for class size reductions, and demanded accountability from low-performing schools.

ACORN received considerable public attention when it gathered data, anecdotal and quantitative, exposing institutional racism as the basis for the tracking of students of color from kindergarten through high school. The two reports, entitled "Secret Apartheid," documented the racial differences in who was accepted at prestigious high schools and who was given information about gifted and talented programs. The reports forced the schools chancellor's office to draft new standards.

ACORN often focuses on central bureaucracies rather than principals because it believes centralized policies leave principals powerless. Over a three-year period, it negotiated with the chancellor's office to implement a South Bronx School Improvement Zone. Schools in the zone are to receive increased training for teachers, parent organizing support, and new reading programs for struggling students. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) endorsed ACORN's plan, laying the groundwork for the ACORN-UFT partnership against privatization.

OAKLAND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
A Small-Schools Movement Takes Hold in Oakland

FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, a powerful model for organizing began in Oakland, California, when a group of eight churches came together to discuss how they could work jointly to make their neighborhoods better places for raising families. With overwhelming problems of poverty and political instability, the relationships that create community had disappeared from the city. These conversations among the religious leaders led to the creation of Oakland Community Organizations (OCO).

Oakland Community Organizations

Photograph courtesy of Oakland Community Organizations

OCO now employs seven full-time paid organizers, who are responsible for developing leaders from the 40 participating local churches and 15 schools in their surrounding neighborhoods. Organizers hold one-on-one meetings to learn what needs to be done to rebuild relationships. In these meetings, the education organizer explains, people "talk about their pain and where they are not feeling power in their lives, and we listen for contradictions. Then people get challenged to act on their values and create power. Through the organizing work we teach them to get public commitments from elected officials for action . . . and to do the footwork . . . to get what we want implemented."

OCO leaders believe that these one-on-one relationships are key to the organization's ability to make change happen in the community. For too long, the largely minority populations in the flatlands of Oakland, lying below wealthier areas in the hills, felt disenfranchised and ignored. OCO's skills at listening and developing power are helping to build a new sense of hope and possibility in the community.

Motivated by severe overcrowding and underperforming schools, OCO led a major campaign to implement a new small-schools policy in Oakland, in partnership with the Bay Area Coalition for Essential Schools and the Oakland Unified School District. After conducting a meeting that was attended by 2,500 people, the organization worked with the district to develop a timeline for opening ten new small schools in three years and for eliminating multitrack (year-round) school schedules. The

partners administered the proposal process for new schools, supported the creation of design teams involving parents and teachers, and researched sites for future schools.

This work led them to a new role—supporting and monitoring the implementation of the small-schools initiative. Realizing the importance of working with teachers, OCO organizes teachers as well as parents. This work with teachers presents new challenges for the group—how to counter the fears of the local teachers union and individual teachers that the group's organizing will unfairly place blame for school failures on them. The education organizer explains: "We treat the Teacher Working Group like one of our local organizing committees. We need to find a place for this relationship [between parent and teacher advocates] to live in our institutions."

OCO organizers and leaders also waged successful campaigns to reduce the number of multitrack schools in Oakland from eight to zero and to press the district to develop more effective strategies for reducing school overcrowding. They have worked on school and neighborhood safety issues and have pushed for increased community input in decision-making processes and facilities improvements in schools. In September 2001 five new small schools opened, and the creation of at least two more has been approved for this coming school year. Sites have been identified to build 13 new small schools, which will be funded by a $300 million school facilities bond measure that was supported by OCO and approved by 70 percent of Oakland's voters.

SOUTH CENTRAL YOUTH EMPOWERED THROUGH ACTION

Los Angeles Youth Turn Around a School Bureaucracy

IN 1995, a group of young people in South Central Los Angeles joined the fight to pass a bond measure to bring $2.4 billion in facilities funding to their schools. The bond proposition won overwhelming support from inner-city voters, but the district's plans for spending the money favored less needy areas. With the support of the Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment in Los Angeles, young people began organizing to make sure the bond issue funds would be used first in the most needy schools. Through surveys and forums, South Central Youth Empowered through Action (SCYEA) gathered data on facilities conditions and developed a list of repair priorities as well as a proposal for how the district could disperse funds through a need-based process. Youth successfully convinced the superintendent and school board to direct $153 million to repair the oldest, most overcrowded and run-down schools and hire a person to oversee these repairs.

The Community Coalition is a decade-old neighborhood-based organization committed to multi-issue, multi-racial organizing in South Central Los Angeles. Its work with youth began with a campaign to reduce the number of liquor stores in their neighborhoods, restrict the sale of tobacco to children and youth, and reduce the availability of illegal drugs. Out of these efforts came SCYEA. Until its campaign on the bond measure in 1995, SCYEA had used schools to recruit students for its neighborhood improvement campaigns. After its successful effort on the bond measure, SCYEA began looking at student achievement. Students are organizing around several

CHECK THE FACTS

DISAPPEARANCE RATES

Every year, our high schools lose thousands of students. Each school begins with a *huge* freshman class, which dramatically shrinks every school year through graduation time. About 61 percent of South LA students "disappear" before they reach their senior year. We call this the "disappearance" rate because the official transfer and drop-out rates do not account for this enormous loss of students.

PENITENTIARY TRACKING

In the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) there is an alarming rise in the number of students forced into special education. The LAUSD has placed one of every five African American students in special education, where students are three times more likely to have untrained teachers and to drop out. Many of these students end up in prison, where most of the population did not complete high school.

COLLEGE ELIGIBILITY

According to 1999 state records, only 12 percent of students graduating from South LA high schools went on to attend California's public four-year colleges. Statewide, only a quarter of African American and Latino public high school graduates were even eligible to apply to a UC or Cal State University (most of them are missing one or two required courses).

— South Central Youth Empowered through Action

Sources: Statistical data provided by the California Post Secondary Education Commission (CPEC), the Los Angeles Unified School District, the National Institute for Literacy, and the *Los Angeles Times*.

demands: more academic and college counselors, more college prep courses, fewer uncertified and inexperienced teachers, and greater attention to the persistently high "push-out" rates and low college-entry rates.

SCYEA works with youth attending six high schools in the area. It uses issue campaigns to develop leaders, teach organizing skills, and show youth they can win concrete improvements in their lives. Like its parent group, the Community Coalition, SCYEA seeks social, political, and economic change in the environments of youth and adults in South Los Angeles. According to the Community Coalition, its vision of transforming communities extends to schools, which need to be "equity-based, community-serving, and not just educating youth, but providing services in a more holistic sense," according to the director of youth programs.

Youth leadership development is at the core of SCYEA's work. Youth lead the organizing and participate in ongoing training as well as in an eight-week political education academy. This academy helps students analyze the political structure of schools in south Los Angeles and learn vital organizing skills for political activism such as public speaking, data analysis, agitation methods, media outreach, and issue development. Through SCYEA, black and Latino youth have opportunities to work through their own inter-ethnic issues.

Like many youth-serving organizations, SCYEA has learned that to maintain a "fighting" edge to its work, it must address the support needs of its youth. It provides referrals to social services as well as academic support that is not available at the area's schools.

WASHINGTON INTERFAITH NETWORK
Organizing in the Shadow of the Capitol Dome

FOR YEARS, the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF), known for its grassroots organizing and social-change agenda, wanted to bring its message to the nation's capital. Finally, a group of clergy provided an opening by asking for its help. IAF sent an organizer, and by 1995 the groundwork had been laid for the Washington Interfaith Network (WIN) to make itself heard. WIN become an alliance of 45 religious organizations in the District of Columbia, representing about 20,000 families. One member of its three-person staff focuses on education issues.

WIN picked a turbulent time to enter the DC political arena. A budget crisis in 1995 prompted Congress to appoint a control board to govern the city. In 1996, the control board fired the superintendent of schools and appointed a general and a new school board to manage the system. As WIN initiated its efforts to develop political power for district residents, its targets in the city's leadership kept shifting dramatically.

WIN then put its energies into developing a five-point agenda applicable to whatever government entity was in place. One point was to secure $30 million for after-school programs citywide. In a "sign up and take charge" drive during the 1998 mayoral campaign, WIN secured 20,000 signatures endorsing the agenda. The candidate who won the election had endorsed all five items. So far, $15 million has been set aside for after-school programs.

In true IAF style, the after-school program issue was chosen to initiate WIN's work in the District because it met two key criteria: it was important to WIN's constituency and it was "WIN-able." To IAF organizers, creating a story of success with an early victory is critical to building momentum.

The next big education issue for WIN was the poor state of school facilities. Front-page news for years, hazardous conditions in DC schools had prompted two lawsuits filed by another advocacy group, Parents United. WIN took the issue to the grassroots, using member groups to research problems at their neighborhood schools. Working with the Twenty-First Century School Fund, another group concerned with school facilities, WIN identified 25 schools that needed major repairs. While WIN usually acts alone, it does partner with strategic groups that can add to its power or provide information. The Twenty-First Century School Fund had data on school facilities and knew the building codes. WIN did the confrontational work, presenting the superintendent of schools with a five-point agenda based on the research. The superintendent agreed to the repairs and to WIN's deadlines.

WIN's future targets include teacher quality and other issues related to teaching and learning. According to its education organizer, it will draw from the work of other groups in these areas. The District of Columbia public schools, however, present special challenges to WIN and the traditional IAF approaches. No state government provides oversight or a mechanism for accountability. Therefore, community organizing is critical to developing local capacity to demand improvement in the educational quality of the schools.

YOUTH UNITED FOR CHANGE

Philadelphia Youth Challenge Officials to Set Higher Standards

IN THEIR SENIOR YEAR, students at one Philadelphia high school were still studying long division. "They had no idea they should be taking algebra to be prepared for college," says an organizer. In 1991, students from four high schools in north Philadelphia began to realize the consequences of low expectations and formed Youth United for Change (YUC). YUC began its first school improvement organizing campaign in 1994.

YUC's membership reflects the racial diversity of the high schools it draws from—members are African American, Latino, white, and Asian. YUC seeks to build power and leadership among youth to hold school and public officials accountable for providing better services and schools to meet their needs.

YUC initiates its campaigns by building independent student committees in schools, holding after-school meetings within school buildings. Each high school committee meets weekly inside the school or in a community space, depending on the issue and level of controversy with the school. Young people also participate in weekend and after-school leadership training sessions and carry out surveys and listening campaigns in their schools to identify youth concerns. YUC has led campaigns on school safety, overcrowding, textbooks, school leadership, and math and science curricula. These campaigns focus on mobilizing youth, although parents, teachers, and school officials also participate.

The organizing has contributed to improved student attendance and the enrollment of more students in higher-level math coursework. For example, as part of its campaign to help raise graduation rates, YUC developed a high school reform plan that focused special attention on supporting ninth graders. YUC members asked for the elimination of general math and general science, and for the institution of college preparatory classes for all students. After the first year, the percentage of ninth graders taking algebra rose from 60 to 100.

YUC is a member organization of the East Pennsylvania Organizing Project (EPOP), to which it pays annual membership dues and from which it receives technical assistance and support. EPOP and YUC have a mutually supportive relationship. For example, members of YUC are able to move into parent organizing by becoming members of EPOP, and EPOP is able to refer young people to join YUC. The organizations also participate in joint actions. Through EPOP, YUC is affiliated with the Pacific Institute for Community Organizing, a national network.

APPENDICES

METHODOLOGY

THE RESEARCH TEAM collected data on 66 community groups that are organizing to improve schools at eight sites across the country: Baltimore; Chicago; Los Angeles; the Mississippi Delta; New York City; Philadelphia; the San Francisco Bay Area; and Washington, DC. The research was carried out between 1999 and 2001 by the New York University Institute for Education and Social Policy and three research partners—California Tomorrow, Designs for Change, and Southern Echo.

Our research team began by establishing a national advisory panel that identified the following five criteria for groups selected for the study:

1. a base of parents, youth, or neighborhood residents who engage in collective action to address issues related to poor performance and inequities in local public schools, and whose vision includes excellent and equitable public schools for all children;
2. a focus on winning concrete changes in school policy and practice, using a variety of strategies including mobilization, direct action, negotiation, training, and working in coalitions;
3. a structure that supports and encourages democratic decision-making by group members in all aspects of the organization, including decision-making about issues, strategies, tactics, and vision;
4. a process for engaging in ongoing recruitment of new members and consistent development of leadership from within the membership base; and
5. a commitment to building a strong and lasting organization dedicated to altering the power relations that produce failing schools in low- and moderate-income neighborhoods and communities of color.

The advisory group and research partners used these criteria to identify the groups to be surveyed. The research partners then conducted interviews at each site. Our Chicago research partner also held focus groups to discuss local issues and concerns. With the research partners, we developed a framework for an analysis of the data that forms the basis of this report.

CONTACT INFORMATION FOR ORGANIZATIONS IN THE STUDY

Bay Area, California (San Francisco and Oakland)

ACORN Oakland
3205 Farnam St.
Oakland, CA 94601-3031
TEL 510-436-5690
FAX 510-436-6395
caacornoaro@acorn.org
www.acorn.org
CONTACT Nathan Henderson-James

Asian Pacific Environmental Network
Laotian Organizing Project
220 25th St.
Richmond, CA 94804-1808
TEL 510-236-4616
FAX 510-236-4572
www.apen4ej.org
CONTACT Grace Kong

Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center
515 Cortland Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94110-5611
TEL 415-206-2140
FAX 415-648-0793
CONTACT Claire Van Zevern

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth
Youth Making a Change
459 Vienna St.
San Francisco, CA 94112-2831
TEL 415-239-0161
FAX 415-239-0584
info@colemanadvocates.org
www.colemanadvocates.org
CONTACT Taj James

Community Education and Services
Revitalizing Education and Learning
80 Fresno St.
San Francisco, CA 94133-4024
TEL 415-982-0615
FAX 415-434-3128
asha@cessf.org
www.cessf.org
CONTACT Asha Mehta

East Bay Asian Youth Center
San Antonio Village Collaborative
2025 E. 12th St.
Berkeley, CA 94606-4925
TEL 510-533-1092
FAX 510-533-6825
ebayc@ebayc.org
www.ebayc.org
CONTACT Isabelle Toscano

Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Third Eye Movement
PMB 409
1230 Market St.
San Francisco, CA 94102-4801
TEL 415-951-4844
FAX 415-951-4813
raquel@ellabakercenter.org
www.ellabakercenter.org
CONTACT Jasmine Smith

Jamestown Community Center
Youth Power
3382 26th St.
San Francisco, CA 94110-4632
TEL 415-647-4709
FAX 415-647-4718
claudia@jamestownsf.org
www.jamestownsf.org
CONTACT Claudia Jasin

Justice Matters Institute
Coalition for Fair & Caring Schools
814 Mission St., Ste. 602
San Francisco, CA 94103-3025
TEL 415-243-8113
FAX 415-243-8004
info@justicematters.org
www.justicematters.org
CONTACT Susan Sandler

Kids First! Coalition
1625 Broadway
Oakland, CA 94612-2103
TEL 510-452-2043
FAX 510-452-2017
kim@kidsfirstoakland.org
www.kidsfirstoakland.org/
CONTACT Kim Miyoshi

Oakland Coalition of Congregations
412 Monte Vista Ave.
Oakland, CA 94611-4570
TEL 510-654-1820
FAX 510-654-9630
CONTACT Clifford Gilmore

People United for a Better Oakland
Youth of Oakland United
1920 Park Blvd.
Oakland, CA 94606-1862
TEL 510-452-2010
FAX 510-452-2017
info@peopleunited.org
www.peopleunited.org
CONTACT George Villanueva

San Francisco Organizing Project
995 Market St., Ste. 1220
San Francisco, CA 94103-1727
TEL 415-995-9898
FAX 415-995-9899
CONTACT Bob Untiedt

San Francisco Peer Resources
ChangeMakers
1000 Cayuga Ave., Rm. 28
San Francisco, CA 94112-3236
TEL 415-469-4216
FAX 415-469-0859
CONTACT John O'Brien

Youth Empowerment Center
Youth Force Coalition
1357 5th St.
Oakland, CA 94607-1804
TEL 510-451-5466
FAX 510-451-5866
youthforce@youthec.org
www.youthec.org
CONTACT Rory Caygill

Los Angeles

Coalition for Educational Justice
1002 Doreen Pl., Apt. 3
Venice, CA 90291-3584
TEL 310-452-3310
FAX 213-387-3500
caputoprl@aol.com
CONTACT Alex Caputo-Pearl

Communities for a Better Environment
Youth for Environmental Justice Project
5610 Pacific Blvd., Ste. 203
Huntington Park, CA 90255-2502
TEL 323-826-9771
FAX 323-826-7079
info@cbecal.org
www.cbecal.org
CONTACT Yuki Kidokoro

Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment
South Central Youth Empowered through Action
8101 S. Vermont Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90044-3535
TEL 323-750-9087
FAX 323-750-9640
www.ccsapt.org
CONTACT Alberto Retana

Mar Vista Family Center
5075 S. Slauson Ave.
Culver City, CA 90230-5663
TEL 310-390-9607
FAX 310-390-4888
marvistafc@aol.com
CONTACT Dianna Cherry

Parents for Unity
PO Box 19151
Los Angeles, CA 90019-0151
TEL 323-734-9353
FAX 323-735-8105
gmedel@aol.com
CONTACT Gabriel Medel

UCLA Labor Occupational Safety & Health Program
Youth Project
Hershey Hall
PO Box 951478
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1478
TEL 310-794-5992
FAX 310-794-6403
lauriek@ucla.edu
www.losh.ucla.edu
CONTACT Laurie Kominski

Watts/Century Latino Organization
Parents and Students Organized
10360 Wilmington Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90002-3701
TEL 323-564-9140
FAX 213-564-2737
CONTACT Jaime Zeladon

Youth Organizing Communities
2811 Whittier Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90023-1526
TEL 323-780-7874
FAX 323-780-7608
yoc@schoolsnotjails.com
www.schoolsnotjails.com
CONTACT Luis Sanchez

Youth United for Community Action
Higher Learning
2907 W. Vernon Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90008-4714
TEL 323-294-3566
FAX 323-294-4902
hlyuca@igc.org
CONTACT Frank Parker

Washington, DC

Asian American LEAD
3045 15th St. NW
Washington, DC 20009-4211
TEL 202-884-0322
FAX 202-884-0012
info@aalead.org
www.aalead.org
CONTACT Sandy Dang

Washington Interfaith Network
1226 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20005-3615
TEL 202-518-0815
FAX 202-667-0037
CONTACT Martin Trimble

Chicago, Illinois

ACORN Illinois
650 S. Clark St.
Chicago, IL 60605-1719
TEL 312-939-7488
FAX 312-939-6877
ilacorn@acorn.org
www.acorn.org
CONTACT Madeline Talbott

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Association House
1116 N. Kedzie Ave.
Chicago, IL 60651-4182
TEL 773-772-7170
FAX 773-384-0560
www.associationhouse.org
CONTACT Cynthia Moreno, Maria Gamboa

Bethel New Life
Community Organizing for Re-Neighboring
367 N. Karlov Ave.
Chicago, IL 60624-1804
TEL 773-826-5540
FAX 773-826-5728
bethelnewlife@hotmail.com
CONTACT Mildred Wiley

Blocks Together
3507 W. North Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647-4808
TEL 773-276-2194
FAX 773-276-2296
btogether@aol.com
www.blockstogether.org
CONTACT Melissa Spatz

Logan Square Neighborhood Association
3321 W. Wrightwood Ave.
Chicago, IL 60647-1405
TEL 773-384-4370
FAX 773-384-0624
lsna@one.org
CONTACT Nancy Aardema

Organization of the NorthEast
1329 W. Wilson Ave.
Chicago, IL 60640-5508
TEL 773-769-3232
FAX 773-769-0729
CONTACT Sarah Jan Knoy

Parents United for Responsible Education
407 S. Dearborn St., Ste. 515
Chicago, IL 60605-1115
TEL 312-461-1994
FAX 312-461-1927
CONTACT Julie Woestehoff

Rogers Park Community Action Network
1545 W. Morse Ave.
Chicago, IL 60626-3306
TEL 773-973-7888
FAX 773-973-7282
CONTACT Fran Tobin

Southwest Youth Collaborative
Generation Y
6400 S. Kedzie Ave.
Chicago, IL 60629-2830
TEL 773-476-3534
FAX 773-476-3615
swyouth@igc.org
www.swyc.org
CONTACT Jeremy Lehoud

West Town Leadership United
1116 N. Kedzie Ave., Fl. 5
Chicago, IL 60651-4178
TEL 773-394-7484
FAX 773-384-0560
CONTACT Idida Perez

Baltimore, Maryland

ACORN Maryland
825 Park Ave.
Baltimore, MD 21201-4806
TEL 410-752-2228
FAX 410-685-3521
mdacorn@acorn.org
www.acorn.org
CONTACT Mitchell Klein

Southeast Education Task Force
100 S. Washington St.
Baltimore, MD 21231-1937
TEL 410-675-6300
FAX 410-732-7827
baejcc@juno.com
CONTACT Barbara Ann English

Mississippi Delta

Citizens for Quality Education
109 Swinney Ln.
Lexington, MS 39095-3309
TEL 662-834-0080
cqe@tecinfo.com
CONTACT Ellen Reddy

Concerned Citizens for a Better Tunica County
PO Box 2249
Tunica, MS 38676-2249
TEL 662-363-6059
marmel@gmi.net
CONTACT Melvin Young

Concerned Citizens of Montgomery County
306 Main St.
Duck Hill, MS 38925-9701
TEL 662-565-2478
alfowhite@aol.com
CONTACT Drustella White

Indianola Parent Student Group
606 Walker St.
Indianola, MS 38751-3562
TEL 662-887-1510
CONTACT Betty Petty

Tallahatchie Education and Redistricting Committee
PO Box 274
Webb, MS 38966-0274
TEL 662-375-8030
CONTACT Patricia Brown

New York City

ACORN New York City
88 3rd Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11217-2314
TEL 718-246-7900
FAX 718-246-7939
nyacorn@acorn.org
www.acorn.org
CONTACT Ismene Speliotis

ACORN South Bronx
310 Walton Ave.
Bronx, NY 10451-5428
TEL 718-292-0070
FAX 718-292-8846
nyacornbrxro@acorn.org
www.acorn.org
CONTACT Heather Appel

Central Brooklyn Churches
140 Devoe St.
Brooklyn, NY 11211-3726
TEL 718-302-9840
FAX 718-302-0466
cbchurches@juno.com
CONTACT Leroi Gill

Community Advocates for Educational Excellence
103 E. 125th St., Ste. 604
New York, NY 10035-1641
TEL 212-426-9206
FAX 212-996-7246
CONTACT Bruce Ellis, Monique Washington

Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation
3214 Fulton St.
Brooklyn, NY 11208-1948
TEL 718-647-8100
FAX 718-647-2104
chldc@aol.com
CONTACT Emily Blank

Highbridge Community Life Center
Neighbors in Highbridge
979 Ogden Ave.
Bronx, NY 10452-5411
TEL 718-681-2222
FAX 718-681-4137
CONTACT Dana Broussard

Jacob Riis Neighborhood Settlement House
Queensbridge Community in Action
3881 Thirteenth St.
Long Island City, NY 11101
TEL 718-784-3200
FAX 718-784-3055
CONTACT Yvette Grissom

Mothers on the Move
928 Intervale Ave.
Bronx, NY 10459-4226
TEL 718-842-2224
FAX 718-842-2665
www.mothersonthemove.org
CONTACT Wanda Salamon, James Mumm

New Settlement Apartments Parent Action Committee
1512 Townsend Ave.
Bronx, NY 10452-6010
TEL 718-716-8000
FAX 718-294-4085
CONTACT Nilda Louisa

Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition
103 E. 196th St.
Bronx, NY 10468-3637
TEL 718-584-0515, 718-295-0900
FAX 718-733-6922
CONTACT Mary Dailey.
www.nwbccc.org

Parent Organizing Consortium
88 3rd Ave.
Brooklyn, NY 11217-2314
TEL 718-222-1088
FAX 718-246-7939
CONTACT Christine Marinoni

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

ACORN Pennsylvania
846 N. Broad St., Fl. 2
Philadelphia, PA 19130-2234
TEL 215-765-0042
FAX 215-765-0045
paacorn@acorn.org
www.acorn.org
CONTACT Jeff Ordower

Alliance Organizing Project
511 N. Broad St.
Philadelphia, PA 19123-3230
TEL 215-625-9916
FAX 215-625-9116
aop@allianceorg.org
www.allianceorg.org
CONTACT Melania Page-Gaither

Asian Americans United
913 Arch St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107-2428
TEL 215-925-1538
FAX 215-925-1539
aaunited@critpath.org
www.aaunited.org
CONTACT Ellen Somekawa

Eastern Philadelphia Organizing Project
2625 B St.
Philadelphia, PA 19125-1024
TEL 215-634-8922
FAX 215-634-8827
epop@epopleaders.org
www.epopleaders.org
CONTACT Steve Honeyman

Urban Retrievers
Philadelphia Student Union
1315 Spruce St.
Philadelphia, PA 19107-5601
TEL 215-546-3290
FAX 215-546-3296
CONTACT Eric Braxton

Youth United for Change
2801 Frankford Ave., Rm. 111
Philadelphia, PA 19134-4006
TEL 215-423-9588
rebeccar@yucyouth.org
CONTACT Rebecca Rathje

ADVISORY GROUP

WARREN ADAMS-LEAVITT, Executive Director, Kansas City Church Community Organization, Kansas City, Missouri

KAREN BASS, Executive Director, Community Coalition for Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment, Los Angeles, California

KELLEY COLLINGS, Former Executive Director, Alliance Organizing Project, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

MATTHEW COUNTRYMAN, Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

SCOTT DOUGLAS, Executive Director, Greater Birmingham Ministries, Birmingham, Alabama

ROZ EVERDELL, Director of Organizing, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Boston, Massachusetts

BOB FISHER, Professor, Community Organization, School of Social Work; Director, Urban and Community Studies program, University of Connecticut

MIKE GECAN, Senior Organizer, Metro Industrial Areas Foundation, New York City

LOIS HARR, Member, Board of Directors, Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, Bronx, New York

KEVIN JORDAN, Associate Director for Economic and Community Development, Bon Secours of Maryland Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland

TERRY KELEHER, Action Education Program Director, Applied Research Center, Oakland, California

HELENE O'BRIEN, National Field Director, ACORN National, Phoenix, Arizona

ERIC OUTTEN, Executive Director, Schools First!, Chicago, Illinois

HELEN SCHAUB, Former Executive Director, Mothers on the Move, New York City

GARLAND YATES, Senior Associate, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, Baltimore, Maryland

RELATED INSTITUTE PUBLICATIONS

The following related documents are available on the Institute's website, *www.nyu.edu/iesp*

Mediratta, K., N. Fruchter, et al. *Mapping the Field of School Reform Organizing: A Report on EducationOrganizing in Baltimore; Chicago; Los Angeles; the Mississippi Delta; New York City; Philadelphia; San Francisco; and Washington, DC. August 2001.*

Zachary, E., and o. olatoye. *A Case Study: Community Organizing for School Improvement in the South Bronx.* March 2001.

CASE STUDIES

Copies of the case studies on each study site are available at *www.nyu.edu/iesp* or by contacting the organizations listed below.

California Tomorrow
1904 Franklin, Stuite 300
Oakland, CA 94612
TEL 510-496-0220
FAX 510-496-0225
CONTACT Laurie Olsen, Mamie Chow, Ruben Lizardo

Designs for Change
6 N. Michigan St., Ste. 1600
Chicago, IL 60602-4814
TEL 312-857-9292
FAX 312-857-9299
dfc1@aol.com
CONTACT Suzanne Davenport

Institute for Education and Social Policy
726 Broadway, 5th floor
New York, NY 10003
TEL 212-988-5880
FAX 212-995-4564
www.nyu.edu/iesp/
CONTACT Kavitha Mediratta

Southern Echo
P. O. Box 10433
Jackson, MS 39289
TEL 601-352-1500
FAX 601-352-2266
CONTACT Nsanbi Lambright

Northwest Bronx Community and Clergy Coalition, Bronx, New York

Photograph by Jordan Mo

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

INSTITUTE FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL POLICY
726 BROADWAY, FIFTH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NY 10003
TEL (212) 998-5880
FAX (212) 995-4564
www.nyu.edu/iesp

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. Department of Education
Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)
National Library of Education (NLE)
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)

NOTICE

Reproduction Basis

X	This document is covered by a signed "Reproduction Release (Blanket)" form (on file within the ERIC system), encompassing all or classes of documents from its source organization and, therefore, does not require a "Specific Document" Release form.
	This document is Federally-funded, or carries its own permission to reproduce, or is otherwise in the public domain and, therefore, may be reproduced by ERIC without a signed Reproduction Release form (either "Specific Document" or "Blanket").